Kenneth GOLDSMITH'S UbuWeb
An Artist's Contribution to the Digital Humanities

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Dora García
Phillippe Garrel
Henri Gastelli
Antonio Gaudí
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Jean Genet
German Dada
Alberto Giacometti
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Ruth Lingford
Sharon Lockhart
Julia Loktev
Nate Lowman
Alvin Lucier
The Lumière Brothers
Clark Lunberry
John & Evan Lurie
David Lynch
Willard Maas
George Maciunas
Christopher Maclaine
Karim Aïnghsoudlou
Johannes Maier
David Maljkovic
Djibril Diop Mambéty
Donato Mancini
Babette Mangolte
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Rosa Barba
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Christian Marclay
Mark D
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Jonas Mekas
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Erno Metzner
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Steve Reich
Ernst Reijseger
Jennifer Reeves
The Residents
La Ribot
Gerhard Richter
Hans Richter
Ron Rice
Terry Riley
Arthur Rimbaud
David Rimmer
Pipilotti Rist
Donald Richie
Alain Robbe-Grillet
John Rose
Peter Rose
Kay Rosen
Marina Rosenfeld
Martha Rosler
Jeri Cain Rossi
Ugo Rondinone
Mika Rottenberg
Jacques Roubaud
Jean Rouch
Barbara Rubin
Jerry Rubin
Aïda Ruilova
Stefan Ruitenbeek
Raúl Ruiz
Allen Ruppersberg
Walter Ruttmann
Tom Sachs
Sackner Archive
Sara Sackner
Shirin Sabahi
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Anri Sala
Alejandra Salinas and Aeron Bergman
Jayce Salloum and Elia Suleiman
Keith Sanborn
Gus Van Sant
Sanne Sannes
Julião Sarmento
Aram Saroyan
Aki Sasamoto
Wilhelm Sasnal
Janek Schaefer
Wim Schippers
Christoph Schlingensief
Carolee Schneemann
Collier Schorr
Werner Schroeter
Lillian Schwartz
Richard Serra
Ivko Šešić
Nagy Shaker and Paolo Isaja
Paul Sharits
Sonny Sharrock
Jim Shedden
Cindy Sherman
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Laurie Simmons
Fatboy Slim
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CONTENTS

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Introduction

My primary aim is to provide an analytical description of UbuWeb [www.ubu.com], a website founded in 1996 by American artist and New York resident Kenneth Goldsmith (b. 1961). UbuWeb brings together documents relating to experimental and avant-garde practices in the realms of literature, music, film, and more generally, the history of ideas.

To begin with I consider the website as a publishing portal and describe the different ways in which the editorial process takes place. Then, extending my examination to the site's content, I look at the Digital Humanities movement as well as related projects and ones sharing the same intellectual or artistic thrust; there are now a large number of researchers, editors, and artists in the United States engaged in these projects who are putting bodies of annotated works online based on freely accessible and usable texts. This is also occurring in other countries, of course, and aggregates to form a vast international community.

Given its deliberately unique form relative to academic and conventional norms, it is immediately clear that UbuWeb is a project designed on the basis of the web's potential. It is thus a fragile, alternative object whose development is intertwined with that of its evolving medium. By the same token it inevitably labors under constraints, since in using scattered documentary resources it plays the part of the ragpicker (to use Walter Benjamin's expression), making the most of found bits and pieces and adding to their value by collecting and displaying them.

This unique form is now claimed by its creator as a work of art. Hence the opening of "Letter to Bettina Funcke," which is part of a group of publications edited by the recipient for the 2012 Kassel documenta, the five-yearly exhibition devoted to modern and contemporary art:

Saturday November 6, 2010

New York City

Dear Bettina,

It's been more than a month since we had coffee and the whole time, I've been thinking about how to best enact your suggestion: claiming UbuWeb as an artwork, perhaps the most significant artwork I will ever make. Or else to try to weave the various strands into my practice as a Gesamtkunstwerk. For the past fifteen years, I've been working daily on UbuWeb, a completely independent resource dedicated to all strains of the avant-garde, ethnopoetics, and outsider arts. And although the site gives the smokescreen of being a large organization, the truth is that it's pretty much me doing everything: from design to curating to coding, it's a one-man operation. Most of my work is secretarial, fending off lawsuits and placating angry copyright holders, answering endless submissions, fielding queries from curious reporters dealing with server crashes and denial-service hacks, and keeping the machines running. The procuring of content and the hand-coding HTML are actually the most relaxing parts of what I do, often times late at night, after the kids have gone to bed, with a big glass of Jack Daniel's by my side. Wait, I've just admitted something that I've never stated publicly. UbuWeb is entirely me. I've always wanted to remain faceless, letting the site speak for itself. There's nothing worse than a vanity site, the kind of place some overriding ego, name, and agenda speaks louder than the work that's presented. So instead of this being "Kenneth Goldsmith's UbuWeb," I've put forth the notion of faceless institution. For the austere way the site is designed, to the fact that I always speak about it in the first-person plural as "we," to the massive amount of content that we host, I've always tried to throw the focus away from me. But in truth, with the exception of the occasional student or intern, it's all me.[1]

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[1] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Letter to Bettina Funcke: 100 Notes – 100 Thoughts*, Documenta Series 017 (Ostfildern: Hatje Cantz, 2011).

How does the site's collection, and the innovative practices that it introduces to the digital paradigm, alter the nature of a work of art, the criteria that govern a work, and the very definition of an artist? In this instance, the collector's artistic contribution to the realm of writing and poetry forms part of an American cultural history that links poets, artists, publishers, and contemporary theorists.

And yet, my exploration of UbuWeb began through Film Studies. I wanted to compare three projects from three distinct periods—the exhibitions Une Histoire du cinéma (1977) and Les Immatériaux (1985), both held at the Pompidou Center in Paris, and the UbuWeb site, launched in 1996—to trace the changes in inscription mediums over time. The aim was to tease out what effect these changes had had on the political redefinition of public space, the space we become responsible for by virtue of being citizens and which potentially represents an engagement with something bigger than ourselves—a responsibility, a vision of society, our code of ethics.

Particularly fascinating in the filmic offerings brought together by Une Histoire du cinéma was the possibility they offered for film as a medium and surface of inscription, as a site for inquiry and investigation but also of observation and creation. They suggested both new methods of operation—professional cooperatives (The Film-Makers' Cooperative) and publications (Film Culture), to name just those founded by Jonas Mekas; the coupling of films and their historiography with theoretical texts such as those of P.A. Sitney or of the filmmakers themselves (including Peter Kubelka, Stan Brakhage, and Michael Snow)—and the European examples that were developing in parallel (involving, for example, Peter Gidal, Malcolm Le Grice, Wilhelm and Birgit Hein, Werner Nekes and Dore O., Kurt Kren, Philippe Garrel, Pierre Clémenti, and Giovanni Martedi).

Equally important was that this exhibition had been chosen to inaugurate a new museum, the Pompidou Center, which was dedicated to loosening the boundaries of the fine arts to let in a variety of genres, such as film, and new issues, including urbanism (the building itself sought to integrate itself into the city

and claimed to belong to its residents; that access to its extensive external escalator that led up to the rooftop's panoramic views remain free was specifically stipulated). It was thanks to this exhibition, which brought together American underground cinema, European and American structural cinema, French experimental cinema, and the avant-gardes of the 1920s, that the Pompidou Center commissioned the production of new copies to found their film collection. It was thus that film made its entry into the hallowed ground of the museum and took its place in the history of genres alongside painting, sculpture, music (the Institut de Recherche et Coordination Acoustique/Musique, or Ircam, was created at the same time and belongs to the same project) and the performing arts, which also had access to this cultural temple. This multidisciplinarity—the modernism of its time—was already at work in the historical avant-gardes: the futurists, Dada, constructivists, surrealists, and all the more recent such movements.

To this inaugural exhibition of 1977 I compared another of the Pompidou Center's exhibitions, which took place in the following decade and has since garnered cult status, chiefly for having tried to engender a multidisciplinary museum (and which may have been this dream's final battle cry): Les Immatériaux of 1985, organized by the philosopher Jean-François Lyotard. The author of *The Postmodern Condition* used the exhibition to stage the epochs' questions on material, scientific, and intellectual developments and their acceleration.[2] How had we got from the avant-gardes defended by Une Histoire du cinéma to the postmodernism of Les Immatériaux? It had, after all, been the same scene; Lyotard had written "Acinéma," an essay that paid homage to underground and experimental cinema's countercultural creativity, in 1973, as well as having made several experimental films including Mao Gillette (1974), consisting entirely of flickers.[3] An archive on UbuWeb allows one to hear Lyotard presenting the

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[2] Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1984). The original, *La Condition postmoderne: Rapport sur le savoir* (Paris: Editions de Minuit) was published in 1979.

[3] Jean-François Lyotard, "Acinema," trans. Paisley N. Livingston, in *Narrative, Apparatus, Ideology*, ed. Philip Rosen (New York: Columbia University Press, 1986), 349-359. For the original, see Jean-François Lyotard, "L'Acinéma," in *Cinéma: Théorie, Lectures*, ed. Dominique Noguez (Paris: Klincksieck, 1973), 357-369.

concept of postmodernism in 1979, to coincide with the appearance of *The Postmodern Condition*, as "an aesthetic of satire; satire as a saturation of all genres," invoking at the same time Diderot and contemporary art.[4] A season of films was organized in the context of Les Immatériaux by Claudine Ezyckman and Guy Fihman (who were at the root of the French cooperative represented in Une Histoire du Cinéma, later to become Cinédoc). This film series retold the history of avant-garde cinema in combination with some scientific films (of which the most recent was an avant-premiere on Mandelbrot's fractals) and full-length features chosen for their echo of themes in the exhibition.

UbuWeb's online archive emerged for the contemporary era in the lineage of these exhibitions; its collection of films was constantly consulted in Film Studies, especially by those with an interest in avant-garde cinema. Other than the films, however, the guiding principle of the archive remained a mystery. How had the contents been selected? What were the principles behind this publishing platform that gave free access to texts, audio files, and audiovisual documents about avant-gardes? How did this archive query the boundaries between disciplines and between mediums? The fact of documents having different formats (textual, sound, moving image) revived the question of a work's perimeter, as well as its curation, function, citation, enjoyment, and use.

Is the web the site's constituent matter? This would make it a vision of a new kind of writing medium. Or is it rather a form of media, a tool of communication like the telephone, whose channels it borrows, which would make its novelty pivot on publication, circulation, and distribution? Clearly, UbuWeb is simultaneously a writing medium (as publishing space) and a tool of communication and distribution. The web's attributes were initially explored and exploited by pioneers who became the editors of this documentary collection in the making. Developed in the 1990s, it is also a space whose complexity as it becomes progressively bigger and more democratic moves it away from the

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[4] "La pensée post-moderne" [Postmodern Thought] Excerpt from "Dialogues sur la condition post-moderne avec Vincent Descombes," produced by Roger Pillaudin (France-Culture, December 18, 1979). http://www.ubu.com/sound/lyotard.html

margins of the early adopters towards the mainstream public arena, to the point where the image and rules of public space have been altered.

The web is now regarded as having developed in phases, a historiography outlined in part 3. While considering that the site emanates from the web's first iteration—web 1.0, the document web—I explore how the web's values developed, insisting as they do on a web based on the openness, exchange, and access of which UbuWeb is an example, with its willingness to place itself in the gift economy—one principle of which is to not buy or sell anything—and which works thanks to the donation of sources, skills, and access to technology. Is the open web a mythology, with its own genesis and heroes, or did older countercultural seeds simply take root in new soil? How will the historiography of the web evolve, given that new fields allowing more precise explorations of its historical importance are emerging? And in which disciplines is today's web being analyzed?

Another realm of investigation, the evolution of the web as a space, remains crucial: from its beginnings as a locus of experimentation with vague boundaries, it has become a dominant and mainstream media with ever more defined and monetized uses. To get a sense of how the notion of public space has evolved, we can assess society's awareness of it through the current force of public power. Meanwhile, discussions among web publishers in cultural institutions, such as the Pompidou Center or the Cinémathèque Française, confirm the difficulty of working online using documents and artworks in the current legal framework, which is essentially a status quo built up on a case by case basis with a number of ad hoc adjustments.

But in addition to the web's main phases over the past 25 years—this quarter century that has allowed us to witness a massive technological shift—there are other timescales whose effects have been part of the recent transition. There is, for example, a long-term, anthropological scale, which measures this shift relative to other, more distant ones with a comparable impact, and which focuses on elements of continuity in the transmission of documents, knowledge, and contributions. On this scale, what is a piece of writing, a book, an author, an

image? And how are these things made, transmitted, conserved, annotated, discussed, used, destroyed, or taught?[5]

The present investigation is not so much based on information theory as a participant in the study of the history of forms/genres.

Nouvelle Société No5 (1969)

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[5] The comparative history described in *Lieux de savoirs* (Albin Michel, 2007) and *Alexandries* (BNF, 2001), edited by Christian Jacob, opens these concepts to an infinity of times and places that are also relevant to the processes of digital publishing.

PART 1

DESCRIPTION

‣ André Boucourechliev Archipel 3 (1970) [MP3]

‣ Vinko Globokar Discours II / Sequenza V / Solo Für Melodie-Instrument Mit Rückkopplung / Consecuenza (1969) [MP3]

‣ Howardena Pindell The Free, White and 21 (1980)

‣ Gerard Malanga Up From the Archives (2000) [MP3]

‣ Jayne Cortez and the Firespitters Maintain Control (1986) [MP3]

‣ Paul DeMarinis The Edison Effect (2005) [MP3]

‣ Shûji Terayama A Band of Old Detectives and the Crime of Dr. Caligari (1969) and Aesop Monogatari [MP3]

‣ Shahryar Nashat Modern Body Comedy (2006), Plaque (Slab) (2007), Factor Green (2011)

‣ Andrea Fraser The Official Welcome (Hamburger Kunstverein) (2003)

‣ People Like Us The Magical Misery Tour (2011)

‣ Ebrahim Golestan The Yek Atash (1961) (A Fire)

‣ Bruce and Norman Yonemoto Spalding Gray's Map of L.A. (1984)

‣ La Ribot Laughing Hole (2006)

‣ Bradley Eros & Tim Geraghty Trans Trans (Transformers Transformed) (2009)

‣ Fereydoun Rahnema Persepolis "Siyavosh dar Takht-e Jamshid" (1960)

‣ Salvador Dalí Arena (1986, documentary)

‣ J.G. Ballard The Drowned World (1962) [MP3]

Visual Poetry - New Updates Ubu's Visual Poetry page has just posted over 80 new texts including exceedingly rare editions of d.a.levy's magazines The Buddhist Thirdclass Junkmail Oracle and The Marrahwanna Quarterly and Ed Sander's Fuck You: A Magazine of the Arts. Complementing these magazines are PDFs of scarce editions by Canadian visual poets David UU, John Riddell and bpNichol; Americans Johanna Drucker and Rosmarie Waldrop and International practicioners such as Max Ernst, Marcel Broodthaers and Bob Cobbing. This update focuses on small press magazines and highlights rarely-seen radical work in collage, overprinting and machine-based visual poetry.

Richard Foreman on UbuWeb We've just posted a bunch of videos and films of theater director Richard Foreman on Ubu and it made us realize just how much of his stuff we've accumulated over the years. So it seems like a good time to share it with you. Films included here are: City Archives (1978), Strong Medicine (1981), and Lava (1989). We also host a collection of his sound loops, from Now That Communism is Dead My Life Feels Empty!" (2001), as well as hosting the script [PDF] to that play along with script for Bad Boy Nietzche (2000) [PDF], and Slice [PDF], a poetry manuscript from 2001. We also have Charles Bernstein in conversation with Richard Foreman first published in TDR in 1992. Richard Foreman's sound page on Ubu is filled with readings, interviews and performances.

Paul Pfeiffer -- Video Works, 1998-2003 In his photographs and video installations, which often have religious titles, Pfeiffer utilizes new technology to destabilize the experience of viewing, whether through the erasure of the central athlete in sports spectacles or by splicing scenes so as to trap figures in endless repetition. Included here are eighteen videos including the erased boxers in "The Long Count" (2000-01) and several segments from Pfeiffer's deconstruction of Michael Jackson, "Live Evil" (2002).

Alison Knowles -- Thirty Years' Audio Survey, 1962-1992 UbuWeb is pleased to present the audio works of pioneering Fluxus artist Alison Knowles. Best known for her performances, constructions, and artists' books, this thirty-year survey focuses exclusively on her audio works. Often made from the residue of ephemeral performances, Knowles highlights the beauty and subtlety of the everyday, extending John Cage's musical ethos as filtered through a feminist perspective. You can download her seminal 1965 Great Bear pamphlet "by Alison Knowles" here.

‣ Joseph Beuys, Douglas Davis, and Nam June Paik Documenta 6 Satellite Telecast (1977)

‣ Ed Atkins Material Witness OR A Liquid Cop (2012)

‣ John Cage Catch 44 (1971)

‣ Buckminster Fuller Art Net Lecture (1974) [MP3]

‣ Ragnar Kjartansson Mercy (2005)

‣ Joseph Beuys ICA Lecture (1974) [MP3]

‣ Charles Atlas Put Blood in the Music (1989), The Legend of Leigh Bowery (2002)

‣ Nam June Paik Documentary, "Topless Cellist" Charlotte Moorman (1995)

‣ Mary Ellen Bute Films (1934-1967)

‣ Mike Kelley and Michael Smith A Voyage of Growth and Discovery (2010)

‣ Jack Goldstein Lecture at Art Center College of Design (1992)

‣ Joyce Wieland Short Films (1967-69)

‣ Jorge Luis Borges Borges Por El Mismo aka Borges in His Own Voice (1967) [MP3]

‣ Louis-Ferdinand Céline Archival Readings, Interviews, Performances, Songs, Radio Broadcasts [MP3]

‣ Theodor W. Adorno - Walter Benjamin Correspondence / Briefwechsel : Theodor W. Adorno & Walter Benjamin [MP3]

‣ Michael Ondaatje Three Films (1970-1974)

When you go to UbuWeb via its homepage, www.ubu.com, what stands out most is the predominance of text, which occupies the entire page. What does this volume of text indicate? It is both an echo of the site's origin—a collection of documents devoted to poetry—and of the early days of the web, when its content was overwhelmingly text-based. It is only with further exploration of the site that one learns that it revolves around writing in all its forms and encountered through a variety of experiences. The process of description thus leads us in the first instance to consider the formal prominence of writing as a first layer of identity.

1.1. Types of text

The writing that covers the page consists of several types of text. First of all, there is "native text." This designation suggests novelty and birth, pointing to the site's role as a publishing portal. The publication function updates documents through the curatorial comments that accompany them. (The idea of curating, a concept borrowed from the art world, has recently become popular on the internet. I use it in a technical sense; the comments might be newly written or may have been produced when the document was first published, in which case their reuse provides insight into the context of their first appearance.)

Native text can be unedited or copy-and-pasted from an already existing work; its nativeness derives from its medium, which is the publication space provided by the website functioning as a page, as opposed to a document-object which would be framed as an imported artifact. I am thus distinguishing between the process of production (the making of a document) and the process of publishing (presenting it online). Another type of publication, separate from documents, involves the native texts relating to the UbuWeb project itself. These are self-referential texts that articulate its principles.

Two colors are used in the production of the homepage: native text is in black while red signals "active text." Active text takes the form of phrases that serve as links to other pages. Just publishing a link in this context qualifies as a minimal act of curating.

1.2 Genesis of a collection

UbuWeb charts changes in various writing mediums thanks to its vast range of documents. The profusion of material is, however, divided into categories using a classification system that streams the collection into a series of major themes, which in turn allow us to trace the genealogy of its makeup. This genealogy is not without its elements of chance, or as one might say, serendipity (to use the term that denotes the act of fortuitously stumbling on things that the internet so readily enables).

The site is nonetheless driven chiefly by its creator's collector's impulse, as Goldsmith himself has noted in several places, notably in "The Bride Stripped Bare and the Dematerialization of Tony Curtis," an article in which the author develops the concept of "nude media."[6] This term describes "bare" files, divorced from the context that lent them authority and meaning, and which thus move "defrocked" through file-sharing systems, leading them to pitch up in unexpected places. To begin with, and before the advent of the web, Goldsmith was looking in late-80s New York for concrete poetry, a formalist movement born in the 1950s. "Generally produced in small, poorly distributed editions during the 60s and 70s, sound and concrete poetry by the 1980s seemed to be a moribund genre. Over the next 5 years, though, I managed to track down a small but generative collection of books, journals, LPs and tapes of concrete and sound poetry." [7] In 1995, a friend of his showed him Netscape, the search engine of the time, and in November 1996 he launched UbuWeb, allowing him to put an initial body of work online. "Scanning the images and seeing them backlit by the computer screen made everything seem fresh; concrete poetry was once again in dialogue with contemporary culture." [8] The idea of regeneration was also invoked

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[6] Kenneth Goldsmith, "The Bride Stripped Bare and the dematerialization of Tony Curtis," available online http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/nude.pdf and in *New Media Poetics: Contexts, Technotexts, and Theories*, ed. Morris and Swiss (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

[7] Ibid.

[8] Ibid.

by the great master of collecting, who for Kenneth Goldsmith is Walter Benjamin.

> I am not exaggerating when I say that to a true collector the acquisition of a new book is its rebirth. This is the childlike element which in a collector mingles with the element of old age. For children can accomplish the renewal of existence in a hundred unfailing ways. Among children, collecting is only one process of renewal; other processes are the painting of objects, the cutting out of figures, the application of decals—the whole range of childlike modes of acquisition, from touching things to giving them names.[9]

Kenneth Goldsmith created his site, then, only shortly after discovering the internet. The discovery of this space alerted him to a key feature of the medium: its ability to create an artifact by putting an old document back in circulation. So although at one point the web was a new thing, it was predominantly an archive. Indeed, this first World Wide Web of the pioneers is known as the document web. On UbuWeb, a document can be a text, a sound file, or an audiovisual file. Still pictures—photography—are not a document category on the site, but rather fall under textual resources. A text can, however, be presented as an image, i.e. as an image file, a format which confers a kind of finality and archival value on the document as an exact reproduction. But the very plasticity of text plays a major part in the items present on the site, via the documents themselves or the various theoretical texts about them.

A "text" can be approached through a host of different definitions. In "The Death of the Author," Roland Barthes puts forward the term "text" to free writing from the restrictive yolk of the author as a social and psychological figure constructed by positivist history. If the text is a reading, it can escape from the constraints of an unequivocal meaning, a "stop clause" that serves to "close the writing." Thus "the reader is a man without history, without biography, without psychology; he is only that someone who holds gathered into a single field all the

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[9] Walter Benjamin, "Unpacking My Library: A Talk about Book Collecting" in *Illuminations*, ed. Hannah Arendt, trans. Harry Zohn (New York: Schocken, 1969), 61.

paths of which the text is constituted." The text "consists of multiple writings, issuing from several cultures and entering into dialogue with each other, into parody, into contestation; but there is one place where this multiplicity is collected, united, and this place is not the author [...] but the reader: the reader is the very space in which are inscribed, without any being lost, all the citations a writing consists of; the unity of a text is not in its origin, it is in its destination." The only power of the author is to "combine the different kinds of writing." Barthes' essay figures on UbuWeb in the English version published in *Aspen* magazine in 1967 (discussed below in Section 1.3, Web Editions).[10]

In the succeeding decade, the definitional shifts in the United States were led by the ideas of Language Poets such as Charles Bernstein, Ron Silliman, and Bob Perelman—ideas that enjoy particular prominence on UbuWeb—as well as by those of American conceptual artists originating in the visual arts, such as Joseph Kosuth, Sol Lewitt, and Robert Smithson, to name but a few.

Kenneth Goldsmith frequently draws attention to the plasticity bestowed on a text by the web's and computers' capabilities. "Never before has language had so much materiality—fluidity, plasticity, malleability."[11] The copy-and-paste function allows the easy transfer of texts from one location to another, as well as their fragmentation.

As for texts specific status as machine code, Lev Manovich notes in a chapter of *The Language of New Media* devoted to print—which he reminds us was the first medium mass-digitized by computers, well before these were linked to the web—that:

> Text is unique among media types. It plays a privileged role in computer culture. On the one hand, it is one media type among others. But, on the other hand, it is a metalanguage of computer media, a code in which all

[10] Roland Barthes, "The Death of the Author," trans. Richard Howard, Aspen 5-6 (1967). http://www.ubu.com/aspen/aspen5and6/threeEssays.html#barthes The original French version was published under the title "La mort de l'auteur" in *Manteia* 5 (1968).

[11] Kenneth Goldsmith, "Language's Newest Role," personal blog entry published on April 13, 2011 on the Poetry Foundation website. http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/languages-newest-role/

other media are represented: coordinates of 3-D objects, pixel values of digital images, the formatting of a page in HTML. […] If computers use text as their metalanguage, cultural interfaces in their turn inherit the principles of text organization developed by human civilization throughout its existence. One of these principles is a page—a rectangular surface containing a limited amount of information, designed to be accessed in some order, and having a particular relationship to other pages.[12]

1.3. UbuWeb as an alternative publishing platform

Artifact

A text document can be an artifact created using a previously printed edition. It can also be created directly in digital format. There are essentially two ways to create a textual artifact from a printed source:

1) in image mode

A scanner digitizes an edition of the text exactly; it is literally a photograph of the document, a digital version of the facsimile. The photographic ontology confers on the text a boundary and archival portrayal that preserves a trace of the original's medium. This visual facsimile bestows on the copy the original's authenticity, right down to the wear and tear it has experienced up to the moment of the artifact's creation. The Bibliothèque nationale de France is one of many institutions advocating its archival use, saying, "Digitalization through images continues to be a priority since it allows users to access a faithful reproduction of the original document."[13] The "photographic reproduction" model on UbuWeb corresponds with paper archives whose contents have a considerable documentary value, as for example:

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[12] Lev Manovich, *The language of New Media* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001), 74.

[13] BNF, "Numérisation et Métadonnées" [Digitization and metadata]
http://www.bnf.fr/fr/professionnels/numerisation_boite_outils/a.outils_numerisation_mode_image.html

–The magazines of the historical avant-gardes, such as *291*, which was published between 1915 and 1916 in New York by Alfred Stieglitz and vaunted as the first Dada publication in the United States. This magazine has, however, already been digitized in a series of images and a pdf was created to unite them in a single document.[14]

–The entire body of visual poetry, whose textual layout is unconventional and bears a resemblance to drawing.[15]

2) in text mode

Reproduction in text mode is a more recent process and uses OCR (optical character recognition software). The text is preserved but its original medium does not appear. An image is captured but must then be processed to extract its operative components.[16] The resulting digitized document is then amenable to the search and navigation tools that can be applied to textual material. This publishing method thus has the advantage of overcoming the limitations of photographic reproduction.

Republications

UbuWeb also undertakes the republication of works by the Language Poets, especially texts that the editor, Goldsmith, deems "unjustifiably ignored classics." The /ubu ("slash ubu") series, launched in 2003, is a publishing enterprise that takes into account the development of the webpage as a publication medium, an

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[14] University of Iowa library, http://sdrc.lib.uiowa.edu/dada/291/

[15] Ubuweb: Visual Poetry, http://www.ubu.com/vp/. Curated by Derek Beaulieu, edited by Amelia Bentley.

[16] A. Belaid and H. Ceccoti, "La numérisation des documents, principes et évaluation des performances," [Digitizing documents: the principles and evaluation of outcomes] Université Nancy 2, *Loria* http://www.loria.fr/~abelaid/publis/evaluation-OCR.pdf "How it works: a text is a collection of alphabetic characters brought together in words that partake in an established vocabulary. OCR must identify these characters, first acknowledging them individually and then validating the words in which they occur through lexical recognition. […] Characters are identified by learning their shapes." The text concludes, "Although the effectiveness of OCR keeps increasing, recognition will always be subject to limitations due to elements such as symbols, manuscript, complex layout (formulas, tables, bibliographies, etc), and mixed elements (forms, maps, technical drawings, geographical documents, etc)."

endeavor initially explored in the early days of the web by various literary experimenters. It is now possible, using software, to create documents in the form of digitized books. The resulting collection consists of re-publications of important works that are out of print and not sufficiently in demand to warrant reprinting. "All of the reprints in the /ubu series from books that were not already digitized (any title published before 1992 will be one of those) have been painstakingly reset, either after having been scanned and OCR'd, or being retyped into the computer. More recent titles are based on the files used to produce the original book, either from Word files or, in that rarest of instances, Quark files." [17]

Original works

Another of the editor's contributions is a section made up of text documents that are original works. One series, begun in 2007, is called "Publishing The Unpublishable."

> What constitutes an unpublishable work? : Ranging from an 1018-page manuscript (unpublishable due to its length) to a volume of romantic high school poems written by a now-respected innovative poet. You get the idea. The web is a perfect place to test the limits of unpublishability. With no printing, design or distribution costs, we are free to explore that which would never have been feasible, economically and aesthetically. While this exercise began as an exploration and provocation, the resultant texts are unusually rich; what we once considered to be our trash may, after all, turn out to be our greatest treasure.[18]

Web editions

What are the features of the publishing category "web editions"? Web

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[17] /ubu Editions, first series (2003), http://www.ubu.com/ubu/ubu_first.html

[18] /ubu Editions, "Publishing The Unpublishable," ed. Kenneth Goldsmith (2007-present) http://www.ubu.com/ubu/unpub.html

editions adapt various formats to the web using features of the medium that allow it to function as a publishing portal. Web editions in fact echo other moments and examples of alternative publishing. A notable example is the 2004 adaptation of *Aspen* magazine, which was not created by UbuWeb but is available there.

Aspen was a unique publication issued between 1965 and 1971. Created by Phyllis Johnson, each issue consisted of a box containing texts (such as Barthes' "Death of the Author," Susan Sontag's "The Aesthetics of Silence," an extract of *Crash* by J.G. Ballard, or Michel Butor's poem "repair"), that was governed by a theme (Warhol, McLuhan, Fluxus) and that could also contain a floppy disk (by Yoko Ono and John Lennon, for example, or John Cale, whose flexidisc produced an infinite loop because of the shape of its groove), or, as in issue 5+6, Super-8 reels of Hans Richter's *Rhythmus 21* (1921), Laszlo Moholy-Nagy*'s Lightplay* (1931), Robert Morris and Stan VanDerBeck's *Site* (1964), and Robert Rauschenberg's *Linoleum* (1966). In order to be adapted for the internet, these films had to be projected, refilmed, and then transformed into QuickTime files. This was done by San Francisco bookseller Andrew Stafford from his collection of originals. The creator of an online archive focused on Marcel Duchamp [http://www.understandingduchamp.com/], Stafford had faced some opposition from Duchamp's estate, and since *Aspen* included contributions from a substantial number of artists, he chose not to put his work on the magazine online. But Kenneth Goldsmith offered to host it, and in the event only 10% of the writers and artists asked for their work to be withdrawn.

This initial description of UbuWeb has led me to specify some of the processes that were necessary for its creation and for it to develop as a publishing platform that brings together contributions and objects representing a variety of forms, eras, production protocols and ways of being uploaded. As soon as it is online, the collection is thus organized by an editorial authority, which on the one hand allows the production of digital artifacts and on the other hosts and exhibits external artifacts—found or provided—sometimes improving their content or presentation.

1.4 The materiality of language

Concrete poetry was the first body of work edited by Kenneth Goldsmith. His collection began in New York following his discovery of Ruth and Marvin Sackner's vast Florida archive, which he had occasion to see when he delivered a wooden sculpture of a book to them, during the period when he was still only involved in the visual arts.
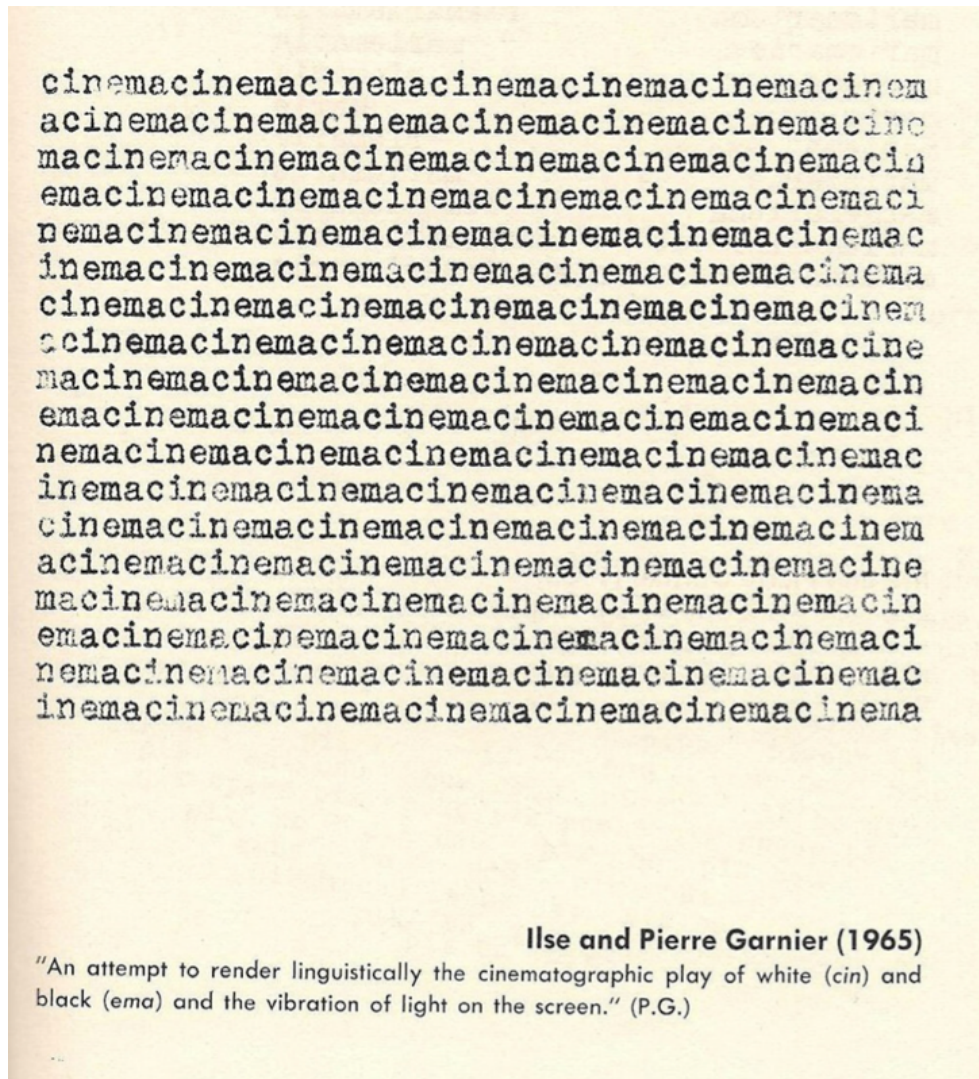
Founded in 1979 and prompted by Mallarmé's 1897 poem "Un Coup de Dés" and various typographic experiments put forward by the Russian Formalists, the Sackners' collection (which they prefer to call an archive) contains documents bearing witness to poetic, graphic, and sound inventions from all the historical avant-gardes up to the Concrete Poetry movement and beyond, including artists' books and contemporary works as well as correspondence and rare publications.[19]

Concrete poetry is an international movement that developed differently in different countries over the course of the 1950s and '60s. In France, Pierre Garnier was one of its key theorists and practitioners. Garnier founded Spatialisme in 1962, about a dozen years after its very first explorers: in Switzerland publicist Eugen Gomringer, in England Benedictine priest Dom Sylvester Houédard, and in Brazil Haroldo de Campos, Augusto de Campos and Décio Pignatari.[20] Garnier was a professor of German who translated Goethe, Nietzsche, and Novalis, and founded Spatialisme as he was breaking with the Communist Party. He was searching, along with his wife Ilse Garnier, to bring poetry into line with the era. A 1963 text asserts the energy, organic nature, and vitality of its elements: "Language is not linear as it is in books. It is rugged, it is circular, it does whirlwinds, it is a spiral of splashes, thrusts, blasts of air, solidifications, it is a storm, a lightning flash through times and through spaces—it is a natural

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[19] See the Sackner Archive http://ww3.rediscov.com/sacknerarchives/Welcome.aspx. Sara Sackner's film *Concrete!* (2006) offers an introduction to this collection by its owners. http://www.ubu.com/film/sackner_concrete.html

[20] See for example Mary Ellen Solt's global panorama, *Concrete Poetry: A World View* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1968) http://www.ubu.com/papers/solt/index.html

phenomenon. The poem is not a mechanism made up of words, it is a living being. And just like a living being, it is ephemeral. "[21]

Ilse and Pierre Garnier (1965)

"An attempt to render linguistically the cinematographic play of white (*cin*) and black (*ema*) and the vibration of light on the screen." (P.G.)

Pierre and Ilse Garnier discuss "the use of the typewriter […] destined to collaborate in the act of poetic creation, i.e. to bring it clarity and precision" where "the mechanical poem, in the entirety of its creation, is a process of transforming work: the work of the poet (strength, imagination, emotion, etc) is transformed into linguistic work (layout, composition, the machinery of words, the power of syllables, syntactical acceleration, etc). The instrument most suited to the creation of the mechanical poem is the typewriter: it allows objectification,

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[21] Ilse and Pierre Garnier, *Poésie spatiale, une anthologie* (Marseille: Éditions Al Dante, 2012), 159.

the introduction of speed in the design of the poem, layering, the progression of spaces, etc...."[22] The tool that produces the text, insofar as it has obtained material autonomy, takes on an important role in the poem.

A focus on the materiality of mediums and signs also characterizes the work of Lori Emerson,[23] who extends it to all writing interfaces, sometimes even ones that are obsolete or have vanished, through the Media Archaeology Lab at the University of Colorado, Boulder. In 2005 she co-edited an issue of the Canadian journal *Open Letter* devoted to Goldsmith's literary experiments titled "Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics,"[24] and has also overseen the creation of the online archive dedicated to the Canadian poet bpNichol [www.bpnichol.ca] and co-edited, with Darren Wershler, a book that collects the poet's work.[25] Darren Wershler has published a history of typewriting based on his dissertation called *The Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting*,[26] edited Kenneth Goldsmith's *Fidget*,[27] and claimed to have been the first editor (at Coach House Books) to publish systematically in both print and digital formats. He has also contributed to the creation of the Spoken Web project at Concordia University, Montreal, which is a collection of recordings of North American poetry made between 1966 and 1974 that includes works by the Beats, Black Mountain poets, and bpNichol [http://spokenweb.concordia.ca/]. Lori Emerson highlights the links on interfaces and archives between bodies of poetry, efforts at conservation and research, and archeological projects:

My background in experimental poetry and poetics is entirely based in

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[22] Ilse and Pierre Garnier, "Le poème mécanique" (1964), ibid., 169.

[23] Lori Emerson, *Reading Writing Interfaces, From the Digital to the Bookbound* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2014).

[24] Barbara Cole and Lori Emerson, eds., "Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics," special issue, *Open Letter: A Canadian Journal of Writing and Theory* 12.7 (Fall 2005).

[25] Lori Emerson and Darren Wershler, eds., *The Alphabet Game: a bp Nichol Reader* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2007).

[26] Darren Wershler, *Iron Whim: A Fragmented History of Typewriting* (Toronto: McClelland & Stewart, 2005).

[27] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Fidget* (Toronto: Coach House Books, 2000).

my interest in materiality, whether it's sound poetry and the accompanying material presence of the body or concrete poetry and the material shape, size, texture of individual letters created via letterpress, typewriter, or dry-transfer lettering. I've also had a longstanding interest in archiving these experimental poetry practices; for example, I've been the editor-in-chief of the online, grassroots archive for the Canadian poet bp Nichol[28] for a number of years and before that I helped created an online audio archive on Pennsound of sound poems by Nichol.[29] Once I moved on to looking at digital poetry as a contemporary mode of experimental writing, I began thinking about the nature of materiality in these digital poems and it didn't take long before I started to see that the original, now obsolete platforms for works from the 1980s and early to mid-1990s were essential to the works themselves—essential both in simply providing access to the writing, especially in cases where no one had yet created an emulation of the work, and in coming to a complete, even deeper understanding of the work and how it was produced.[30]

On UbuWeb, the collector doubled as a publisher in order to develop the archive, in part as a resource to showcase the Language Poets. This was a movement born in the United States in the footsteps of the critical engagement of the late '70s. A contextual definition by Hélène Aji describes the group's political position based on formalist concerns:

Contemporary with the ideological stagnation of the Reagan years, [Language Poetry] relaunches the vein of protest in American poetry by highlighting the ideology that underpins every kind of statement. At the heart of this process is the desire to show this ideological dimension for

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[28] http://www.bpnichol.ca/

[29] http://www.writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/x/Nichol.php

[30] Lori Emerson, "Media Archaeology and Digital Stewardship: an interview with Lori Emerson," by Trevor Owens, October 11, 2012. http://blogs.loc.gov/digitalpreservation/2012/10/media-archaeology-and-digital-stewardship-an-interview-with-lori-emerson/
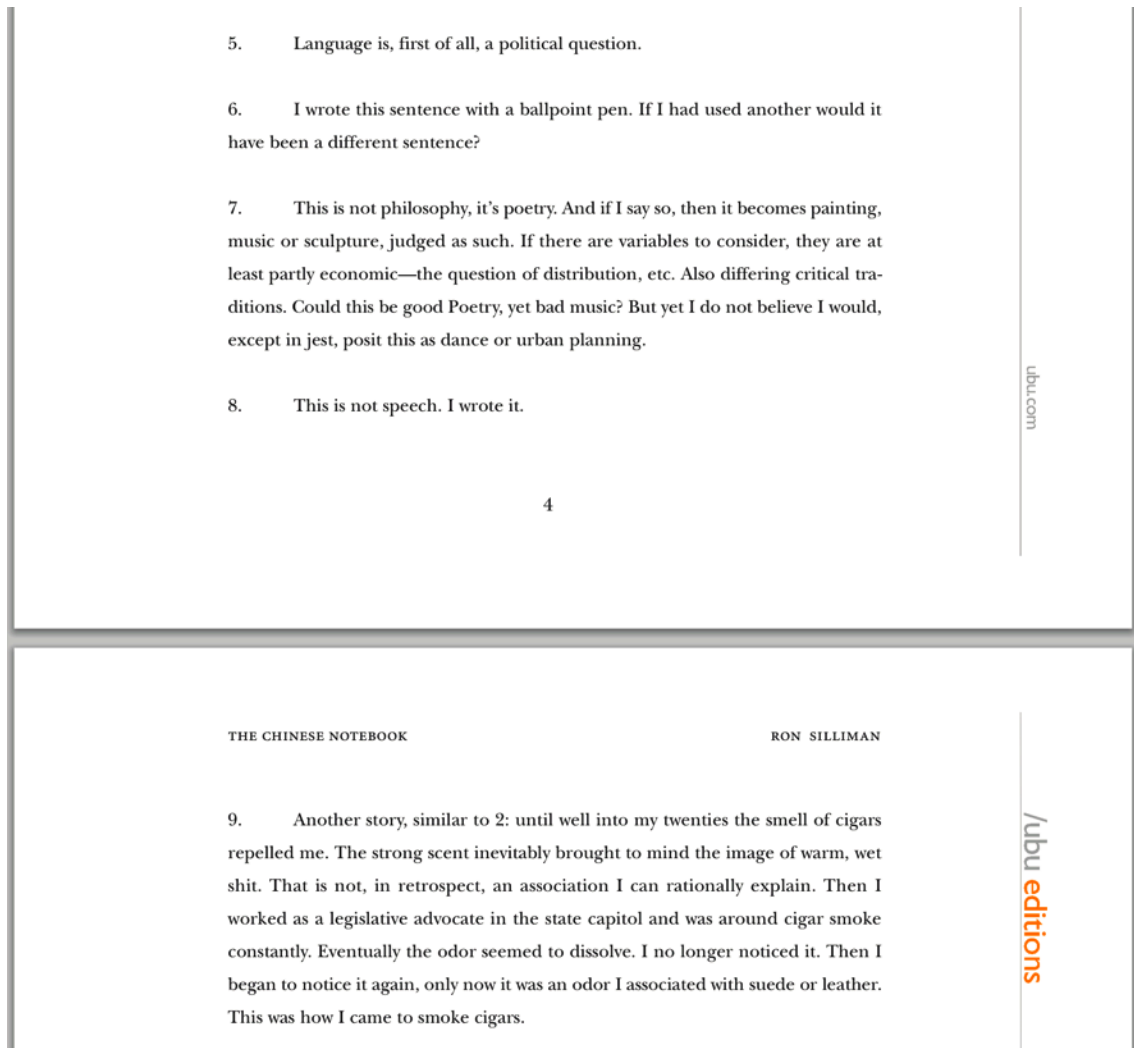
what it is, i.e. to demystify discourse, in order to enable reader awareness, but which nonetheless does not allow the imposition of a specific discourse. From this perspective, the definition of the "new sentence" forms part of a pluralist context, that of the journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, edited by Charles Bernstein and Bruce Andrews between 1978 and 1981, and of Ron Silliman's anthology-manifesto. The anthology, *In the American Tree*, aims to enable the juxtaposition of various practices—all animated, however, by common concerns about literary genre, the relationship between literary texts and philosophy, and modes of reading: in promoting porousness between literary genres, modernist experimental poetry has allowed a convergence with "prose discourses" and reopened the poem to narrative and argumentative modes; the eruption of reasoning in poems and the concomitant rise of theory posed the question of the relationship between theory and poetic praxis with greater intensity; the refusal to limit the poetic experience to the communication of emotions and passions implies a reproblematization of the relationship to the reader—an interlocutor (or inter-creator), and not the mere recipient, of the text.[31]

An example given in *A Guide to Poetics Journal: Writing in the Expanded Field, 1982-1998*, an anthology that traces the history of *Poetics Journal*, describes the nature of the questions being explored: "In *Poetics Journal*'s third issue (May 1983), titled 'Poetry and Philosophy,' connections with British and French avant-garde undertakings were made explicit, and they can be read in the context of Language writing's long-standing engagements with philosophical and theoretical developments in those two countries. Key figures included Ludwig Wittgenstein, Alfred North Whitehead, Roland Barthes, Jacques Derrida, Julia Kristeva, Luce Iragaray, Hélène Cixous and Oulipo [Ouvroir de littérature potentielle], to name

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[31] Hélène Aji, "Politique de la 'nouvelle phrase': quel engagement pour les *Language Poets*?," *Transatlantica* (revue d'études américaines), l'Amérique militante (2008) available on revues.org and openedition.org http://transatlantica.revues.org/3733

just a few."[32]

Poetry is thus no longer being considered as a literary genre but as a space in which to experiment, explore categories, and play with labels to see what holds its ground.

> 5.   Language is, first of all, a political question.
>
> 6.   I wrote this sentence with a ballpoint pen. If I had used another would it have been a different sentence?
>
> 7.   This is not philosophy, it's poetry. And if I say so, then it becomes painting, music or sculpture, judged as such. If there are variables to consider, they are at least partly economic—the question of distribution, etc. Also differing critical traditions. Could this be good Poetry, yet bad music? But yet I do not believe I would, except in jest, posit this as dance or urban planning.
>
> 8.   This is not speech. I wrote it.
>
> 4
>
> THE CHINESE NOTEBOOK   RON SILLIMAN
>
> 9.   Another story, similar to 2: until well into my twenties the smell of cigars repelled me. The strong scent inevitably brought to mind the image of warm, wet shit. That is not, in retrospect, an association I can rationally explain. Then I worked as a legislative advocate in the state capitol and was around cigar smoke constantly. Eventually the odor seemed to dissolve. I no longer noticed it. Then I began to notice it again, only now it was an odor I associated with suede or leather. This was how I came to smoke cigars.

Ron Silliman, The Chinese Notebook

The generation of Conceptual Poets, including Kenneth Goldsmith, Craig Dworkin, Darren Wershler, Christian Bök, Derek Beaulieu, and Vanessa Place, all born in the 1960s, has been particularly invested in the preservation of the memory and publication history of their predecessors the Language Poets. Certain

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[32] Lyn Hejinian and Barrett Watten, *A Guide to Poetics Journal: Writing in the Expanded Field, 1982-1998,* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 2013), 5.

parts of UbuWeb are dedicated to this task, but it is also a feature of other online archives created by figures from Kenneth Goldsmith's network who share the same goals. Darren Wershler explains:

> Conceptual writing is a term that has come to describe the work that my friends and I have produced over the last dozen years. One major example is Kenneth Goldsmith's Day, which consists of the entire text from the September 1, 2000, issue of the New York Times—stock quotes, ads, captions, and all—reset in nine-point type, reproduced line by line, and bound as a massive paperback book, with Goldsmith listed as the author. In more general terms, conceptual writing is a catchall description for a mixed bag of writing techniques used by people who are interested in the impact of networked digital media on the creative process, the social function of authorship, and the economy of publishing.[33]

Another archive, stemming from the same group, is entirely devoted to the Language Poets. Called Eclipse [http://eclipsearchive.org/], it was created by Craig Dworkin, who edited the UbuWeb Anthology of Conceptual Writing[34] as well as a selection of Vito Acconci's poetry, *Language to Cover a Page: The Early Writings of Vito Acconci (Writing Art)*.[35] Eclipse responds to the urgent need to save the Language Poets' small American journals by digitizing them and putting them online, with indexes by author, title, and number. It is a dual-level publication, consisting of both visual facsimiles of each page in image mode, which provides copies of the original publication event, and transcriptions of each page in text mode, downloadable and manipulable for study, teaching, or any other purpose. Of course, each of these archives has its history, with these narratives beginning to emerge as reflective and historical practices and becoming a theme in media archaeology.

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[33] Darren Wershler, "Conceptual Writing as Fanfiction," in Anne Jamison*, fic: Why Fanficton Is Taking Over the World* (Dallas: BenBella Books, 2013).

[34] http://www.ubu.com/concept/

[35] Craig Dworkin, *Language to Cover a Page: The Early Writings of Vito Acconci (Writing Art)* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

The history of the Eclipse archive was begun by Danny Snelson in "Archival Penumbra," an article in which he describes the development of the archive using the traces it successively left in the Internet Archive [www.archive.or]. These can be tracked back to 1996 using the Wayback engine.[36] Danny Snelson created this analysis when the Eclipse archive disappeared from the web following the reorganization of its host university's servers. He also notes that a complete republication became necessary when the archive followed its editor to a new post, i.e. when literature professor Craig Dworkin left Princeton University for the University of Utah. Snelson also describes the evolution over the course of the years (from 2002 to the present) of the encoding formats used for images, and of the impact this had on the way documents are presented. The salvage of this body of journals by Craig Dworkin was motivated by the gradual disappearance of all the publishing material linked with American experimental writing of the past 25 years, particularly the journal *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E*, which, starting in 1978, was one of the first theaters of expression of the Language Poets' generation.

> Among the contemporary reviews and short essays that characterize the bulk of the magazine, one finds offers from the "*L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* Distributing Service," a door-to-door photocopy delivery mechanism for out-of-print works. A catalogue of books and magazines could be ordered for fifty cents from the home address of editor Charles Bernstein, who ran the reprint-on-demand service through a neighborhood Xerox machine. Out-of-print titles by Clark Coolidge, Ron Silliman, Bruce Andrews, and Lyn Hejinian, among others, were on offer in Xerox format.[37]

Danny Snelson established a link between the period's distribution options and the erratic character that online archives could have. This example also highlights the network of skills that were developed as the internet qua publishing platform and archival repository became more specialized, learned from its mistakes, and

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[36] Danny Snelson, "Archival Penumbra," March-April 2013.
http://eclipsearchive.org/Editor/SnelsonPenumbra.pdf
[37] Ibid.

tailored itself to its contributors, showing also that its form evolved in tandem with encoding formats and other technical and aesthetic aspects that have a formal impact.

In 2006, having received the funding to work on it, Danny Snelson also became one of the editors of the /Ubu collection. Since then he has moved to the University of Pennsylvania where, with Kenneth Goldsmith, he edits the PennSound archive founded by Language Poet and editor of *L=A=N=G=U=A=G=E* Charles Bernstein. Snelson publishes a more recent archive, Reissues [https://jacket2.org/reissues/], which puts online, in high definition, complete collections of poetry journals, from the 1920s publication *Secession* to journals of current Language Poets such as *M/E/A/N/I/N/G* and publications with unique formats such as Ted Raworth's *In-folio* (1986-1991) or the journal of ethnopoetry, Jerome Rothenburg and Dennis Tedlock's *Alcheringa* (1970-1980).[38] Snelson, who gained his expertise partly through editing UbuWeb, Eclipse, and PennSound, is part of the third generation in this network—following the Language Poets and Conceptual Poets—and carries on the work of archiving this kind of fragile material.

Another archive in this network, Artists' Books Online [http://www.artistsbooksonline.org/], is produced by Johanna Drucker. Drucker appears in the 2006 film about the Sackner collection, *Concrete!*, as a maker of artists' books, and is also one of the historians of the genre.[39] With ties to the Language Poets group led by Charles Bernstein, Johanna Drucker has become a significant figure in the Digital Humanities by analyzing its habit of pioneering projects under the Digital Humanities banner, conceived under the aegis of the University of Virginia's *SpecLab*. Drucker describes how these archives, created with a view to being permanent, usable, and in line with the standards of archival practice, can take advantage of the web's features—in this instance using the example of the online archive Artists' Books Online, a project carefully put together on the same theme as her book. "The great advantage of electronic processing," notes Drucker, "is the aggregation of data, distributed participation,

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[38] http://jacket2.org/reissues

[39] See Johanna Drucker, *The Century of Artists' Books* (New York: Granary Books, 1995).

and the capacity to collect in virtual space artifacts that are separated in physical space."[40] Drucker also explains the motivations for the creation of an archive and the reasons for choosing the processes used in its formation. These observations represent an important contribution to the reflective investigation of archive-creation, which gives the Digital Humanities its material objects and the elements required to piece together their history:

> ABsOnline is a digital collection of facsimiles and metadata meant to provide a resource for access to and study of artists' books. Defined as original works of art made in the book format, artists' books are often created in very limited editions and are usually held in special collections. Criticism and research in this field has been slow, and a larger picture of collections development, publication patterns, and other large-scale historical patterns is limited. Because of my own involvement in this field as practitioner, scholar, and critic, I felt the need to design metadata to provoke scholarship and criticism.[41]

Finally, PennSound [http://writing.upenn.edu/pennsound/], hosted by the University of Pennsylvania, involves the three generations represented by Charles Bernstein, Kenneth Goldsmith, and Danny Snelson. This archive gathers a huge corpus of work around poetry and literary practices with a historical vision (uploading and showcasing old documents) and a window on the current proliferation of events, discussions, essays, and readings that are being generated. An oral and written history, filmed, recorded, and inventoried, which supports the archive's conceptual basis— the power of audio to capture and preserve the voice that performs—serves both to teach and to promote conversation in contemporary America.

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[40] Johanna Drucker, *SpecLab. Digital Aesthetics and Projects in Speculative Computing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 115.

[41] Ibid., 110.

1.5 The medium is the message

The innovations of concrete poetry, on the other hand, coincided with the moment when audiovisual media found their modernity by overtaking The Gutenberg Galaxy, as Marshall McLuhan describes in this 1962 essay subtitled "The Making of Typographic Man" and his 1964 book *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man*. If we look at the way McLuhan is presented on UbuWeb, we see that the commentary on his "Sound" page is a chronological account of the reception of his ideas in North America seen through a selection of television and radio broadcasts from 1960 to 1995. A remarkable 1968 vinyl record, "The Medium is the Massage," offers a pop representation of McLuhan while producing a panorama of sound effects or snippets of McLuhan and others' voices (ranging from theater-trained to cartoon) responding to each other and weaving a polyphony that mirrors the audiovisual culture of the period, with its musical and visual clashes. The following description of this opus is from a Wikipedia entry that details the specific editorial form used for the eponymous publication:

> The Medium is the Massage: An Inventory of Effects is a book co-created by media analyst Marshall McLuhan and graphic designer Quentin Fiore, and coordinated by Jerome Agel. It was published by Bantam books in 1967 and became a bestseller and a cult classic. The book itself is 160 pages in length and composed in an experimental, collage style with text superimposed on visual elements and vice versa. Some pages are printed backwards and are meant to be read in a mirror. Some are intentionally left blank. Most contain photographs and images both modern and historic, juxtaposed in startling ways. [42]

There is a fairly direct link between McLuhan and concrete poetry, since in the same year, 1967, the Something Else Press, founded by Dick Higgins, published both the first major reference anthology of concrete poetry, Emmett Williams' *An Anthology of Concrete Poetry*, and Marshall McLuhan's *Verbi-Voco-Visual*

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[42] UbuWeb Sound/ McLuhan http://www.ubu.com/sound/mcluhan.html

Explorations. The Something Else Press's publications at this period also included Gertrude Stein's *The Making of Americans* (1966), Wolf Vostell's *de-coll/age happenings* (1966), John Cage's *Notations* (1969), and Henry Cowell's *New Musical Resources* (1969). It thus highlights a culture where experiments in various media—writing, images, moving images, fine arts, dance, and music—intersect. "Verbivocovisual" is a term taken from James Joyce, as Marjorie Perloff explains in a description of Cage's *Lecture on the Weather*.[43]

It was also McLuhan who, in 1965, gave Cage the idea to write a tribute to Joyce for his first "rewriting" of *Finnegans Wake*. The "Writings Through Finnegans Wake" use the mesostic method, whereby the name James Joyce is written in a vertical and central position in capitals, serving as a spine around which fragments from the novel are then inscribed (in other words, like an acrostic but with the key word written through the middle rather than at beginning of the lines), with the single rule that between two capital letters, neither of those two letters can occur.
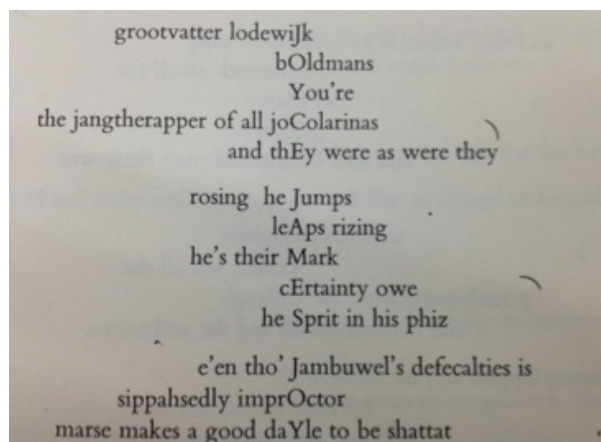
Writings Through Finnegans Wake by John Cage

We can thus see that the definitions of media platforms lie on a spectrum that ranges from language to its system, inscription, tools, and interfaces. In his book on the aesthetics of media, Antonio Somaini, Professor of Aesthetics at the University of Paris 3, revisits McLuhan's terminology in a chapter dedicated to the

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[43] Marjorie Perloff, "Moving Information: On Kenneth Golsdmith's The Weather, " in "Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics," special issue, *Open Letter: A Canadian Journal of Writing and Theory* 12.7 (Fall 2005).

Canadian theorist, "Media as extensions and metaphor: Marshall McLuhan." Somaini notes: "Media, says McLuhan in a now famous definition, must be considered as 'active metaphors' because 'they have the power to translate experience into new forms.' Metaphors in the sense derived from the Greek *metapherein*, 'transport,' denote a transport that, far from being of no consequence, profoundly transform the sender, the recipient, and the very meaning of what is being transported."[44]

1.6 Sound / Music

MP3

Does the audio artifact have the same plasticity on UbuWeb as the textual artifact? If we try to discern its form using its materiality, we discover the MP3, emblem of the democratization of the digital transition by virtue of its nimbleness in the network and its ability to jump from one hard drive to another. The MP3 was perhaps the first mass "nude media." It was the one through which we learned the rudiments of peer-to-peer through Napster, the prototype of file exchange at the end of the '90s. Napster was quickly banned, but this served to unite in its defense a first "mass public" culture aware of new ways of using the web. A radical media rupture thus called into question earlier rights to the acquisition and circulation of cultural content while also allowing the perusal of remote hard drives, creating unprecedented exchange that for a while redistributed individual files from one collection to another, thereby showcasing the MP3 artifact-object: its importance, quality, value, and traffic.

Since then the MP3 has found its historian, Jonathan Sterne, who puts its appearance into context in a collection he oversees named "Sign, Storage,

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[44] Antonio Somaini, "Estetica dei media", in Roberto Diodato and Antonio Somaini, *Estetica dei media e della comunicazione* (Bologna: Il mulino, 2011*),* "I media come estentioni e come metafore: Marshall McLuhan." The original reads, "I media, sostiene McLuhan con una definizione diventa ormai celebre, devono essere considerati come 'metafore attive' in quanto 'hanno il potere di tradurre l'esperienza in forme nuove.' Metafore nel senso derivante dal greco metapherein, 'trasportare': un trasporto che lungi dall'essere uno spostamento privo di conseguenze, trasforma invece profondamente e attivamente il mittente, il ricenvente e il senso stesso di ciò che viene trasportato."

Transmission."[45] Sterne wonders how a format continues to dominate even though the historical and technical conditions of its creation have been surpassed, and how its formatting settles into an imperfect, merely sufficient version, the result of a long history of sound standardization and its transmission at an acceptable level for listening—one might say the legibility of sound—through, especially, telephony (the author traces the research of AT&T's Bell Labs over the course of a century) and radio. This "perceptual coding," whose history Sterne traces, encounters, in more recent periods, avant-garde musicians whose work with acoustic engineers and machines will enable an evolution of sound culture and the representation of its perception:

> The changing attitude towards computers as sound technologies and the cultural status of noise, both of which were essential conditions for the form that perceptual coding took at the turn of the 1980's. One reason is that ideas flowed across fields. There were movements of people between signal processing, avant-garde composition, psychoacoustics, and communication engineering; between avant-garde music and critical theory; and between psychoacoustics and architecture."[46]

A set of documents around one name

A description of how Edgard Varèse (1883-1965) is presented on UbuWeb sheds light on the curatorial methods used to gather a set of documents around an individual. On Varèse's "UbuWeb: Sound" page we find three aspects of this figure; three periods, sources, and types of document. In two instances, the document source is incorporated in the curating process, as its rarity gives it value. A collection called "History of Electronic / Electroacoustic Music (1937-2001)," with its reputation for elusiveness, is preceded by a history of the creation of these digital documents and their transmission. The MP3s were made by a

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[45] Jonathan Sterne, *MP3: The Meaning of a Format* (Durham, NC and London: Duke University Press, 2012).

[46] Ibid. Kindle version, location 1913 of 8252.

composition student in Sao Paolo from CDs brought in by a professor. The student ripped them to his computer, uploaded them to a file-sharing site, and asked if anyone could build a torrent so they could be shared even more easily, only to find a few years later, to his delight and surprise, that the whole collection had been put on UbuWeb. This torrent was itself the focus of research because it disappeared for a while. Digital artifacts thus have their publishing and distribution histories, especially when a publication is, like this one, significant: the content of 62 CDs covering the history of electronic and electroacoustic music transformed into 476 files. The student comments apologetically, however, that the collection figures very few women and focuses on Western music, seemingly implying that it could function as the basis of a broader, more comprehensive history. These kinds of comments occur in several places, making them characteristic of the process: bringing together a number of documents based on what is available, even though in an imperfect, incomplete and sometimes temporary way.

Another series of sound documents relating to Varèse was made using a tape preserved by the Paul Sacher Foundation, a patron of music, in Basel. It consists of recordings of snippets of workshops that took place in 1957 with jazz musicians looking for free jazz in improvisation. These sessions were organized by Earle Brown, a contemporary of John Cage, Morton Feldman, and Christian Wolf, who together made up the New York School, which wished, in Cage's words, that "sounds be themselves rather than vehicles for man-made theories, or expression of human sentiments."[47]

In the last sample, from a French radio program,[48] the rarity resides in the recording of Varèse's actual voice along with substantial information. The creation of high-end archives of this kind, both in terms of form and content, always stirs something in listeners because the voice preserved in good condition has a special way of bringing a person to life. Varèse reveals his musicological erudition and a part of his life, which he describes through a number of details

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[47] Michael Nyman, *Experimental music: Cage and beyond* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999 [1974]), 51.

[48] "Les mémorables d'Edgard Varèse," produced by Arnaud Laporte, Radio-France 2005. http://www.ubu.com/sound/varese.html

about the music and everyday life of his time. This recording is from 1955, the year after the controversial reception in Paris (pitting one half of the room against the other) of the pioneering electroacoustic piece, *Deserts*. The piece mixes instrumental music with recorded urban sounds, distributing the sound using speakers controlled remotely (by Pierre Henry during the premiere at the Champs Élysées Theater in 1954). Varèse is speaking to Georges Charbonnier, a major conduit of new ideas on Radiodiffusion Française in the 1950s and '60s. During the conversation, Varèse describes the cultural vitality of pre-1914 Berlin, where he had taken exile in 1909 after failing to find work in Paris. He was later able to settle in America, pneumonia having allowed him to escape conscription. In the United States, he directed the premieres of several works by French composers, such as Erik Satie's *Socrates* and *Gymnopédies* and works by Debussy and Ravel. He also reveals that he discovered the extent of the sound landscape by going back to pre-Bach works and actively avoiding the dominant musical canon.

In another document, this time from a 1972 television archive, Stockhausen recalls Varèse's innovative spirit by highlighting the importance he placed on tape recordings and the possibility of composing through collage, manipulating and inserting concrete sounds into instrumental music (in Stockhausen's example about Varèse, these are sounds of New York).[49]

In the same 2005 series of Radio-France broadcasts of programs created and recorded by Georges Charbonnier in the '50s and '60s, there is also a series of conversations with Marcel Duchamp that took place in 1960.[50] "Les Mémorables" was the generic title of this revival broadcast on France Culture and it was sourced from the archives of Radio France.

Voice

The preservation of artists' and intellectuals' voices in sound files available on UbuWeb constitutes one of its most precious documentary resources. It allows

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[49] "Lecture 6 (Telemusik), " given by Stockhausen in 1972 at the University of Essex. http://www.ubu.com/film/stockhausen_lectures6-1.html

[50] "Les mémorables de Marcel Duchamp" (French radio broadcast) http://www.ubu.com/sound/duchamp.html

us to hear Pasolini or Apollinaire read their poems, and Barthes or Foucault give lectures; these are voices that cross time and space, they are the jewels of media conservation. This type of document was frequently used in Kenneth Goldsmith's weekly radio broadcasts between 1995 and 2010 on the New Jersey station WMFU, all of which can be heard as podcasts through UbuWeb. Today, by preserving and making available existing documents as well as documenting readings and discussions around current poetry, the PennSound project continues to explore and make the most of the archival, historical, and pedagogical value of these recordings.

But the voice can problematize its own presence. There are countless examples of this in sound poetry documents (in the broad sense we find on UbuWeb), either because of the recording and handling of the fragments, or because of various audibility issues. One example is the digitization of *10 + 2 = 12 American Text-sound Pieces*, a 1974 vinyl record which is said to offer the first recorded anthology of American sound poetry. It contains, for example, a piece by Beth Anderson, *Torero Piece, sound-text piece for 2 voices* (1973), which narrates a story about her daughter but is doubled with vocalized sounds that make it difficult to hear. The anthology also contains Brion Gysin's *I've Come to Free the Words* (1962), in which one hears writing on a chalkboard while the spoken part parodies a class, but what is said *(*"This is the poet Brion Gysin. This poet is in my image. This image has no words") challenges the very form of its delivery. A poem of the same name figures in another series, *Mektoub: recordings (1960-1981)*; the title phrase, "I've Come to Free the Words" is repeated in all its permutations, a system, memorably used by Gertrude Stein, which cuts up a phrase to make its components modular. This ever-changing order of the same set of words and sounds produces an ever-new sentence. As material, then, the text is submitted to alterations, but it could equally be done using fragments of newspapers to create new texts by collage, and can, after being recorded, be cut up on tapes to create yet more abstract reassembly.

Links between voice and poetry are particularly showcased on UbuWeb. Among the sound documents, the importance of poetry is clear, not only insofar as the texts are presented but also because sounds as vocal performance destroy

the logos, in a way reminiscent of the Italian or Russian futurists, of French *lettristes* such as Isidore Isou, whose recordings are featured, or even of Henri Chopin's research, where we hear "je n'ai jamais accepté une poésie sans voix et sans corps" (I have never accepted a poetry without a voice or body), spoken for a manifesto in the sound poem *La civilisation du papier* (1975). We also hear echoes of the beat generation's phrasing, starting from Ginsberg's *Howl* (1955) proclaimed at the Six Gallery in San Francisco. Sound documents also allow us to compare performances belonging to different eras, such as a reading of *Howl* at the Poetry Center of the University of San Francisco in 1956 and another at the Knitting Factory in Brooklyn in 1995, or a 1959 reading of *Kaddish* at the Poetry Center, the tribute to his mother Naomi deceased three years previously, and a performance of it forty years later at the Knitting Factory.

This investment in voice is also important for more recent generations of Americans. On UbuWeb there are the talk-poems of David Antin (b. 1932) and their unique method of creation: "It consists of what he calls 'talkings,' a kind of oral prose, partly improvised in front of an audience, recorded, then worked on at the tape recorder, without any recourse to writing—which is then just a division of the poem."[51] David Antin provides his own definition of it in his book, *What it Means to be Avant-Garde*.[52]

> *some time around the beginning of summer weba called me*
> *and asked if i would be willing to read at lace in early*
> *september   it was part of the l.a. festival and there would*
> *be lots of things going on all over town and I'd be reading*
> *with some other poet i'd never heard of was that all right?*
> *i said that was fine with me because there were lots of*
> *poets i'd never heard of but I hoped she understood that i*
> *dont read anymore I talk and that whatever i happened to say*
> *that was my poetry   which was a kind of performance*

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[51] Hélène Aji, "Discours poétique et poétique du discours, Problématiques de la voix chez David Antin" [Poetic discourse and the poetics of discourse, the complexities of voice in David Antin], *Sillages critiques* 9 (2005). http://sillagescritiques.revues.org/

[52] David Antin, *What it Means to be Avant-Garde* (New Directions, 1993).

The art of performance is very much alive today among the conceptual poet generation. One can often hear Caroline Bergvall, Christian Bök, Craig Dworkin, and Kenneth Goldsmith read their own texts or those of others. "The voice hydrates the driest of texts," notes Goldsmith in *I look to theory only when I realize that somebody has dedicated their entire life to a question I have only fleetingly considered, 2012* (June 2013), a book published on the occasion of its reading by Goldsmith at the Musée du Jeu de Paume in Paris at the invitation of curator Mathieu Copeland, whose aim was to provide a "spoken exhibition."[53]

73 poems, Kenneth Goldsmith / Joan La Barbara

In another instance of voice, Joan La Barbara, who has worked with John Cage and Steve Reich, performed and set to music Kenneth Goldsmith's *73 poems* (this is also the title of an anthology of poems by e.e. cummings, published just after his death in 1963).[54] Using classical technique, La Barbara experiments with vocalization, mixing poetry, speech, song, and noise with music. The body as instrument is extended by these means of amplification and chains of echo. The compositions are based on improvisations that are recorded and then selected and edited (today using the Protools software). *73 poems* has a modern opera dimension through the choral extension of its phrases which come from a variety of sources, including James Joyce, Samuel Beckett, John Cage (to whom the work is dedicated), Joseph Kosuth, Bob Dylan, and news items read in the papers. In the same vein, in 2007, Goldsmith wrote the libretto for and performed the opera *TRANS-WARHOL, Chamber Opera*, which was based on selected interviews with Andy Warhol published by Goldsmith as *I'll be Your Mirror: The Andy Warhol*

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[53] Kenneth Goldsmith, *I look to theory only when I realize that somebody has dedicated their entire life to a question I have only fleetingly considered / Je ne me tourne vers la théorie qu'après avoir réalisé que quelqu'un a consacré toute sa vie à une question qui m'avait à peine traversé l'esprit jusqu'alors, 2012*. Bilingual French-English text, trans. Nicolas Garait, ed. Mathieu Copeland (Paris: Jeu de Paume, 2013).

[54] Kenneth Goldsmith, *73 Poems* (Permanent Press, 1994; with Joan La Barbara, Lovely Music, 1995).

Interviews (2004).[55]

Also online is an encyclopedia of music edited by Kenny G., the alias Goldsmith uses in his role as DJ, called *A Popular Guide to Unpopular Music.* Hosted on WFMU's website [www.wfmu.org/~kennyg/popular.html], the entries are derived from articles published in the *New York Press* at the end of the '90s, chronicling the record releases of avant-garde music.

The margin

In this section I examine one of UbuWeb's themes, the activity of artists on the margins of their art, and more broadly, the circulation of experimental practices as a stimulus for the era. In addition to the circulation of people between domains, referred to by MP3 historian Jonathan Sterne, and the circulation of groups of words to transmit contemporary poetry through voice, marginal practices also include such things as pop culture icons connecting with more underground influences.

Olivier Lussac's *Fluxus et la musique* provides a description of Yoko Ono's first foray into music, which reestablished the pioneering dimension of her work. (Yoko Ono's face serves as the banner for UbuWeb's Sound section, emblematizing the porousness of practices and forms—music-visual arts, experimental-pop.)

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[55] It is worth noting that Charles Bernstein wrote an opera libretto on the life of Walter Benjamin, *Shadowtime* (composer: Brian Ferneyhough) in 2004.

[Yoko Ono's] first public concert in New York was held at the Village Gate in 1961, during the course of an evening devoted to three contemporary Japanese composers. Her contribution was called *A Grapefruit in the World of Park*. As an initial musical prompt, she hears birdsong and immediately translates it into notes. This turns into a composition, *Secret Piece* (1953). Underneath the instructions, next to the treble clef, is a handwritten note. On the second stave, in the bass clef, an F is held, without any indication of how long or at what pitch. Above the treble clef, Ono has written, "with the accompaniment of the birds singing at dawn."[56]

Several of her recordings from this period are on UbuWeb, as are some experimentations made jointly with John Lennon—home-taped recordings without commercial value. The couple use radio's graininess and flux, for example, as a source of music, as in "*radio play (Lennon/Ono) 7'57*," a document born from *Aspen*'s web edition, its original medium having been a flexible plastic record included in *Aspen* 7 (*The British Issue*, 1970).

Another pop culture artist, Caetano Veloso,[57] performs poems by Augusto and Haroldo de Campos, the co-creators, along with Décio Pignateri, of Brazil's concrete poetry movement, *Noisgrandes*. Influenced in music by Anton Webern (and later Varèse and Cage), in literature by Ezra Pound (notably the *Cantos*), Joyce, and e.e. cummings, and in the visual arts by Max Bill and Calder, Augusto and Haroldo de Campos were just as familiar with Apollinaire's *Calligrammes* and Mallarmé's *Coup de Dés* as with the movies of the 1920s and '30s that were then showing in Sao Paolo. All these cultural discoveries and more were available in Brazil at the end of the '40s and early '50s, in the run-up to the launch of the *Noisgrandes* journal in 1952.[58]

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[56] Olivier Lussac, *Fluxus et la musique* (Dijon: Les Presses de Réel, 2010), 69.

[57] Caetano Veloso http://www.ubu.com/sound/veloso.html

[58] See the interview with Augusto de Campos by Marina Corrêa: "Concrete Poetry as an International Movement viewed by Augusto de Campos: an Interview," 2008. http://www.ubu.com/papers/correa-decampos/index.html

Lastly, another pop culture occurrence comes full circle with our point of departure: a Frank Zappa text paying tribute to Edgard Varèse, *Edgar Varèse: The Idol of My Youth*, as well as a letter written by the musician at the age of 16 explaining to the composer how his interest stemmed from the discovery, three years earlier, of *The Complete Works of Edgard Varèse, Vol. 1*, purchased for the not inconsiderable sum at the time of $5.40, and listened to so much that the vinyl had worn down.[59] Thanks to eye-opening exposure to *Ionisations*, Zappa was able to launch into real research on musical composition. "When my history teacher asked us to write on an American that has really done something for the U.S.A. I wrote on you and the Pan American Composers League and the New Symphony. I failed. The teacher had never heard of you and said I made the whole thing up."*[60]*

1.7. Filmography

Taxonomy

What is striking about the page dedicated to filmography on UbuWeb is its sheer variety. It is organized around an alphabetical list of creators, but the list is not simply limited to directors; as with the sound and music sections, the list makes clear the importance of exploring each artist's areas of innovation. For the purposes of this description I will separate text, sound, and audiovisual documents, but as in previous sections, each artist, director, composer and intellectual is represented through a number of documents regardless of their main medium.

Mustafa Abu Ali	Stephen Dwoskin	Bruce LaBruce	Steve Reich
Marina Abramoviç	Dziga Vertov Group	Helmut Lang	Ernst Reijseger
Vito Acconci	Gwilly Edmondez	David Lamelas	Jennifer Reeves
Reza Abdoh	Viking Eggeling	Albert Lamorisse	The Residents
Adbusters	Ed van der Elsken	Andrew Lampert	La Ribot
Bas Jan Ader	Tracey Emin	Owen Land	Gerhard Richter
Masao Adachi	Ed Emshwiller	Abigail Lane	Hans Richter
Peggy Ahwesh	Brian Eno	Matthieu Laurette	Ron Rice
Eija-Liisa Ahtila	Annika Eriksson	Standish Lawder	Terry Riley
Doug Aitken	Max Ernst	George Landow	Arthur Rimbaud

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[59] See Edgard Varèse, Composer, Sound Sculptor, Visionary, ed. F. Meyer and H. Zimmerman (Suffolk, 2006). http://www.ubu.com/papers/zappa_varese_letter.html

[60] Ibid.

The body of films is varied, but we can first of all divide it into two major categories, "films by" and "films about", artists' films on the one hand and documentaries about these artists on the other. One can land upon the same film via two different names, the person it is by and the person it is about. Thus for example Babette Mangolte's filming of Marina Abramovic in *Seven Easy Pieces by Marina Abramovic* (2007) could be found through the entries "Mangolte" or "Abramovic."[61]

Reenactment by Marina Abramovic of *Action Pants, Genital Panic* by Valie Export

The film consists of seven reenactments of performances in which Marina Abramovic reproduces seven seminal works from the history of performance, but not in chronological order. On the first day is Bruce Nauman's *Body Pressure* (1974), on the second, Vito Acconci's *Seedbed* (1972), the third, *Action Pants, Genital Panic* (1969) by Valie Export, the fourth, Gina Pane's *The Conditioning, First Action of Self-Portrait(s)* (1974), the fifth, Joseph Beuys' *How to Explain Pictures to a Dead Hare* (1965), and on the sixth and seventh days, her own performances, *Lips of Thomas* (1975) and *Entering the Other Side* (2005). It is also a historiographic and museographic work, since these films are produced by the

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[61] The Solomon R. Guggenheim Museum, New York, 2007.

Guggenheim Museum in New York. The performances thus become works that can be cited and reproduced. The fact of reproducing performances both to revive them and to put them in a historical context, to experience them anew at some distance from their relevance or shock, is a type of reuse that also probes incarnation as a medium of inscription. It also draws attention to the relationship to suffering and to the performer's organless body, the filming of which records its non-chronological genealogy, while the addition of each piece, each lasting seven hours, and their succession over a series of seven days, gives rise to an impressive pagan ceremony.

The work as document

There are no longer any works, just documents. The transition from work to document can claim to free resources from their shackles. But all publishing processes consist of documentary research and a series of choices that hope to produce an optimal version. On UbuWeb, a piece of work's quality is not a criterion; in fact, its imperfect or damaged state becomes an argument for freeing it. Meanwhile, traditional publishers subject this pirate/ragpicker strategy to a double bind. If the version made accessible is too poor, the reproduction is not considered to be a legitimate representation of the original, and the author's rights are said to be infringed upon; on the other hand, if the version is good, it is seen as competing with the commercially available published version. UbuWeb's position is that if the rights to films and documentaries were requested for each upload to the site, the archive would simply cease to exist. Its vitality stems in large part from the way it is put together, and its philosophy of access is in line with the following beliefs: UbuWeb's content is not in competition with high-quality versions or works that are already in circulation in any case; the site is part of the gift economy, where nothing is paid for or sold; and it is a documentary space dedicated to education.

Contrary to the site's text collection, the audiovisual/filmic collection includes no new material; rather, it is made up entirely of finds of "nude media" from a variety of sources. The issue of audiovisual material on UbuWeb can be

approached from two opposite angles: either it is considered from an archival point of view, i.e. like a gain in the preservation process, or from the perspective of traditional audiovisual publishing, as unfair competition (since it is not subject to the investment necessary to establish new editions that are more representative of the work).

At the level of preservation, UbuWeb prompts us to think about the multiplicity of platforms in existence. Some of these create real problems for archivists, notably television, large parts of which are lost in the United States: "Since its invention, television has been and remains one of our most fragile cultural assets."[62] A huge number of documents come from television broadcasts and are files created by amateurs, sometimes from old VHS recordings shared on the web.

According to Kenneth Goldsmith, some movie directors, notably the generation of structural filmmakers, feel that their works are cheapened by poor copies appearing on UbuWeb. Commercial competition is also feared. For example, the films of Peter Kubelka, the herald of silver film, have been removed because of this fidelity problem. But although none of his films remain, he still features on UbuWeb on the "Sound" page, directing a Gregorian chant by his friend and compatriot, the Viennese Actionist Hermann Nitsch. In another example, two films by Jean Epstein, *La chute de la maison Usher* (1928) and *La glace à trois faces* (1927), were available on the site in very poor-quality American versions, so the Cinémathèque Française, who owns the rights to them and is in the process of creating a high-quality edition, requested their withdrawal.[63]

In June 2013, during a conference in Paris, Goldsmith advocated a virtuous and conciliatory circle between publishers and producers.[64] UbuWeb would remain dedicated to making often poor quality works available, including to curators who could then offer works of a better quality and in a more favorable context, then publishers could acquire a proper copy and the work would get

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[62] Margaret Compton, "The Archivist, The Scholar, and Access to Historic Television Materials," *Cinema Journal* 46.3 (2007).

[63] According to Gilles Duffau, Director of New Media at La Cinémathèque Française.

[64] By invitation of Mathieu Copeland. Held on June 9, 2013 at the Musée du Jeu de Paume, Paris.

shown in galleries, at festivals, in cinemas, and museums.

Credits as they currently appear on UbuWeb

In October 2010, Goldsmith had already advocated this system in an open letter, titled, "An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community," in response to online discussions by those devoted to experimental cinema shortly after a hacker had brought down the site. In the letter Goldsmith inventories the evolutions of and arrangements with people who preserve, restore, edit, and own the rights to works. EAI (Eletronic Arts Intermix), for example, sent UbuWeb a list of artists who did not want to appear on the site, while others, like Leslie Thornton and Peggy Awesh, actively wished to do so. Some artists, meanwhile, take a mixed approach, such as Michael Snow, who allows only two of his films to be made available. There are also others, such as Peter Gidal, who requested to be on it. "[Peter Gidal] felt there was a big uptick from students and scholars by virtue of being able to see and study that which was unavailable before."[65] Goldsmith also reasserted the site's ephemeral and imperfect nature, and its ultimate virtue as prompting online archives that are of higher quality, have more content, and fulfill more advanced requirements. "You have the tools, the resources, the artwork and the knowledge base to do it so much better that I'm doing it," he tells the frameworks community. "I fell into this as Ubu has grown organically (we do it because we can) and am clearly not the best person to be representing experimental cinema."[66]

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[65] Kenneth Goldsmith , "An Open Letter to the Frameworks Community," October 18, 2010. http://www.ubu.com/resources/frameworks.html

[66] Ibid.

▸ Scorpio Rising (1963)

Scorpio Rising is a 1963 experimental film by Kenneth Anger, author of the Hollywood Babylon books, starring Bruce Byron as the biker Scorpio. It

The opposite perspectives can thus be seen as complementary, whereby knowledge of a film through a poor quality version is added to the other methods of distribution and contributes to the director and work's influence. They can also be seen as competition, however, which is the point of view, for example, of the French Re:Voir series, whose creator Pip Chodorov has asked that the films by artists for which he has distribution rights be withdrawn from UbuWeb (including Jean Cocteau, Kenneth Anger, Robert Breer, Viking Eggeling, Fluxfilms, Isidore Isou, Len Lye, Jonas Mekas, Hans Richter, Stan Vanderbeek, Harry Smith, and Michael Snow).[67] Chodorov deems the competition to be unfair insofar as a distributor has to invest to create better copies and compensate the filmmaker. Furthermore, he points out, poor quality versions can detract from the artistic aspect of experimental cinema. The medium is important to his work as a distributor because extensive work is required to create high quality master copies that restore as closely as possible what the filmmaker intended.

There is also the fact that it is difficult for filmmakers to live by their work, which notably inspired Agnès B. in 1992 to produce "Frozen Frames" (photograms or series of photograms on a fixed medium) from films by Jonas

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[67] Personal communication to the author at a meeting with Pip Chodorov on June 25, 2013.

Mekas, allowing them to be exhibited and sold. The problem is thus partly a financial one, revolving around these fragile films that make up a segment of experimental cinema and its complex history.[68]

Photograms of *Diaries, Notes and Sketches* by Jonas Mekas (1969)

It is worth mentioning that UbuWeb went offline for two months in 2005 when a complaint was made regarding one of Bruce Conner's films. This caused the university hosting UbuWeb to have the site taken down because it did not want to get involved in this sort of conflict.[69] And yet, Bruce Conner's films are themselves made using found films, and reuse is of course a fertile field of

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[68] See GAMA (Gateway to Archives of Media Art) http://www.gama-gateway.eu/ a European project sponsored by a German association and the French site 24/25 http://24-25.fr/ which combine in a single portal and search engine the French archives and associations linked with experimental cinema (Circuit Court, Collectif Jeune Cinéma, Heure Exquise, Les Instants Video, Light Cone, Le peuple qui manque, Videoformes).

[69] Darren Wershler, "UbuWeb and Aggressive Fair Dealing," May 2008, unpublished, text provided privately by its author.

experimentation in avant-garde films. Different kinds of reuse serve different purposes in experimental film; Nicole Brenez documents their elegiac, critical, structural, materiological and analytical uses through a number of examples, some of which feature on UbuWeb: films by Paul Sharits, Ken Jacobs, and Malcolm Le Grice, and the misappropriations of René Viénet,[70] which Kenneth Goldsmith also discusses, fascinated by the tour de force of misappropriating B movies by changing the soundtrack in order to support a political protest message on the exploitation of women and workers.[71]

The recovery of audio and audiovisual "nude media" yields an accumulation of finds, an *arte povera* that Goldsmith also involves in his artistic work through the use of media sources (newspapers, radio, television) by displacing their textual content, quoted or recorded, then transcribing them in various ways, and finally allowing them to be seen in a new time and place, in a literary object dubbed conceptual poetry.

1.8. Archive or collection?

Does a collection become an archive just by virtue of being in the public domain? Does its existence imply responsibilities? What ultimately differentiates a collection from an archive, and how do the notions of public and private get articulated around a site such as UbuWeb?

Kenneth Goldsmith noted only recently, "Nor are we interested in preservation in a serious sense. A real institution like MoMA should be doing preservation. Ubu is an eccentricity, an unreliable archive, one based on whim and intuition, it's a wunderkammer, a hobby, a farce. Its beauty is its fragility, its

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[70] Nicole Brenez, "Montage intertextuel et formes contemporaines du remploi dans le cinéma experimental" [Intertextual montage and contemporary forms of reuse in experimental cinema], Cinéma, revue d'études cinématographiques, vol. 13, 1-2 (2002). http://www.erudit.org/revue/cine/2002/v13/n1-2/007956ar.html

[71] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Langage in the Digital Age* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2011), 38.

ephemerality."[72] However, the pedagogical use of the site in universities and art schools partly contradicts this lighthearted image.

Jacques Derrida's *Mal d'archive* begins with a consideration of the semantic origins of the word "archive." This passage thus provides a useful starting point for thinking about the difference between a collection and an archive:

> Arkhe, we recall, names at once the commencement and the commandment. This name apparently coordinates two principles in one: the principle according to the nature of history, there where things commence… but also the principle according to the law, there where men and gods command. […] The meaning of "archive," its only meaning, comes to it from the Greek arkheion: initially a house, a domicile, an address, the residence of the superior magistrats, the archons, those who commanded. The citizens who thus held and signified political power were considered to possess the right to make or to represent the law. On account of their publicly recognized authority, it is at their home, in that place which is their house (private house, family house, or employee's house), that official documents are filed. The archons are first of all the documents' guardians. They do not only ensure the physical security of what is deposited and of the substrate. They are also accorded the hermeneutic right and competence. They have the power to interpret the archives. Entrusted to such archons, these documents in effect speak the law. […] The dwelling, this place where they dwell permanently, marks this institutional passage from the private to the public...[73]

Here, an archive is a repository or foundation based in a place, a residence. This

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[72] Claudia d'Alonzo and Marco Mancuso, "UbuWeb, archives video à l'ère numérique: interview de Kenneth Goldsmith / UbuWeb, Video Archives in the Digital Age: Interview with Kenneth Goldsmith," *MCD Musique et culture digitale* 68 [bilingual French-English publication], Special Issue: "The Open Future," curated by Digicult (Sept-Oct-Nov 2012).

[73] Jacques Derrida, *Archive Fever: A Freudian Impression*, trans. E. Prenowitz (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 1-2.

residence passes from the private to the public when its residents are given political responsibility. Can we use this to construct the distinction between a collection and an archive? Relative to an archive, does a collection have an autonomy and uniqueness that is not committed to an exemplary role? The question of a place as a guarantee of authority is important in the case where an archive is online; it can be moved, hacked, or disappear. The hosts of these archives can be academic, institutional of another kind, or private, and this sometimes changes with the passage of time.

Can we assert that what confers archive status on this collection is the fact that it is accessible to the public and exists in the public realm? Deciding what is worth preserving, in this case, therefore means what is worth sharing. The collection confers visibility on a set of documents that would otherwise circulate and move without fanfare. In this sense, it is an uncovering of neglected documentary resources and allows the presentation of otherwise scattered material. Curation here becomes a process of mending, in that it connects each element to the whole, giving them all visibility, an existence, and a new use.

UbuWeb is an archive by virtue of its public character, but one that wishes to remain a collection in not wanting to be preserved by an institution that would generate a set of norms in order to render it permanent. But the site functions as an archive by virtue of its use, the force of its principles, its coherence, its longevity, and especially by the fact that it works. This aspect—that it actually works—is perhaps the most salient in its warranting the name of archive, it is the proof that the site is maintained and improves on a daily basis, at which level it is like an active machine that achieves continuity. Its identity is stable with regards to the outside, which is why for example it has come to be used as a pedagogical tool.

1.9. Outsider archivists

The most unique and unusual collections are meaningful for the community and can be researched, studied, and explained to a wider audience. One notable

example is the Barcelona Museum of Contemporary Art (MacBa), which has hosted meetings with a number of collectors who could be termed outsider archivists, including Kenneth Goldsmith and Rick Prelinger, to name just the most renowned. These meetings have been carefully documented and transmitted by the Museum through its website [http://www.macba.cat/].

Rick Prelinger has highlighted several unique features of his collecting activities. Beginning in the mid-1980s he tried to gather all promotional, educational, and industrial films fated for destruction that he called "ephemeral films," a set of productions used to disseminate a message in a specific context and whose distribution is thus a priori limited to that context. His collection was acquired in 2002 by the Library of Congress, who saw in it the archival richness of an archive that restores a segment of American history. A part of this collection is openly accessible on Internet Archive [www.archive.org/details/prelinger]. Prelinger then undertook to save amateur and super 8 films, whose format had fallen into disuse. Media transformations are also historical moments that get inscribed in society in a very concrete way: through changes to the range of possibilities for the transmission of readings and recordings. The obsolescence of some earlier formats puts artifacts up for auction a whole generation at a time. At his MacBa presentation, Rick Prelinger related how his collection of ephemeral films grew because a large number of films were abandoned when the media industry transitioned from film format to VHS video, since these abandoned formats become a mine for the ragpickers who could make use of them for free. But the preservation of these documents is already at risk because of the low price they command. The idea of the "orphan film," which Prelinger's work has drawn attention to, can be defined as follows: "Any sort of films that have survived but have no commercial interests to pay the costs of their preservation."[74]

Dan Streible, the organizer of the Orphan Films Symposium, is interested in the study and preservation of neglected films and describes the body of work as follows. "Outside the scope of commercial preservation, including

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[74] Timothy Corrigan and Patricia White, *The Film Experience: An Introduction* (Boston: Bedford/St. Martin's, 2004), quoted in the "Orphan Film" entry on Wikipedia. http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Orphan_film

documentaries, silent movies, newsreels, ethnic films, avant-garde works, home movies, animation, anthropological footage, industrial films, and other independent works, filmpreservation.org continues to have a salutary impact for scholars as well as archivists."[75]

Rick Prelinger discusses the super 8 amateur film as a precious source for history, not only qua document but also because thinking about them displaces and renews voices and testimonials (in the same way that Arlette Farge "listened" to the voices of those confined to 18th-century police registers, never opened until Farge brought them out of obscurity).[76] Finding new sources is a classic enterprise of historical work, but today's alternative archivists have put together remarkable collections, sometimes even rather improbable ones like those on sites and blogs about marginal kinds of music or very specific themes or objects. I am thinking for example of all those vinyl collections whose addresses are shared among amateurs, but which for now do not command a sufficient commercial value to be collected or restored. Without the selfless work of assiduous enthusiasts, such collections would never have been put at the disposal of their few dedicated listeners who may otherwise not even have known of their existence. These efforts are thus noticed, indexed, and identified. As with UbuWeb, their value as an entity and the good will with which they are put together become an important aspect of their nature. Their existence is sometimes due to obscure motives, then, but it is the very uniqueness of the collector that often lends vitality to the collection. Indeed, most cultural institutions share a similar starting point, with many museums taking shape through the serial acquisition of individual collections. The ensemble of collectors that MacBa presents highlights the community of practices which makes up the outsider archives and which is prompted by the vacuum left by more institutionalized collecting. Alongside Rick Prelinger and Kenneth Goldsmith, we also find Jonny Trunk, a collector of used records, a specialist in television music preserved on vinyl, and a master archivist

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[75] Dan Streible, "The Role of Orphan Films in the 21st Century Archive," *Cine Journal* 46.3 (2007).
https://muse.jhu.edu/loginauth=0&type=summary&url=/journals/cinema_journal/v046/46.3streiblehtml
[76] Arlette Farge, *Le goût de l'archive* (Paris: Seuil, 1989).

of pop culture from the '60s to the '80s, and Ed Veenstra, who started by looking for all lost pre-1970 recordings of Frank Zappa before turning his attention to music produced by non-musicians—including music by serial killers, sects, cartoon characters, and children—inventorying all the oddities of these records. MacBa is at the vanguard in its use of the internet and its multimedia publishing platforms, especially RWM, "a radiophonic project from the MACBA website that explores the possibilities of the internet and radio as spaces of synthesis and exhibition."[77] It provides radio programs and recorded and transcribed interviews, as well as readings and conversations, with a description of how events are organized and their secondary storage.

Starting with a description of UbuWeb, the first part of this essay divided documents according to their category: text, sound, or audiovisual. In my initial exploration of the site as a publishing platform, text resources provided examples that give a sense of UbuWeb's artistic contributions, variety, and possibilities. As we then saw, the social component of editorial practices highlights the substantive work achieved by the site, which draws universities into the Digital Humanities and prompts questions about the materiality and historicity of online archives; the bodies of work involved, such as concrete poetry and Language Poetry, already devote a part of their investigations to the materiality of signs. Practical definitions of mediums, forms, channels, editing, publishing, and production and maintenance can help identify fields of future exploration not only with regards to the artifacts themselves but also in the study of their archiving. Issues that this raises have included the evolution of formats, negotiations around questions of copyright, the ethics of increased cultural circulation, and the use of available digital tools whose private or public status has not yet been definitively established.

The following section looks directly at Kenneth Goldsmith's artistic practices, whose methods partly overlap with the ones used to create UbuWeb and offer another perspective that helps explain how the site works.

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[77] RWM Radio Web MacBa, http://rwm.macba.cat (trilingual site in Spanish, Catalan, and English)

Part 2

Kenneth

GOLDSMITH

and his art

2.1. Second Hand

In 1969, John Cage transcribed a two piano version of Erik Satie's 1918 music drama Socrate. Merce Cunningham had choreographed Second Hand to the score, and Cage intended to accompany the dance with his piano version. At the last minute, however, the French firm that held the copyright to Satie's score refused to allow the performance. With an ingenious rewriting, Cage retained the rhythmical architecture of the musical lines, but replaced each note with a new tonal value, creating a melodically original work with an identical rhythmic structure.[78]

Beneath this explanation on the UbuWeb page, Cage's 1969 preface to the resulting piece, *Cheap Imitation*, explains the details of his method. I Ching is used to determine which note to start on or which mode to play in. Cage adds that this technique could equally be employed to imitate harmonies or counterpoints, or even other musical structures. On UbuWeb we can hear the piano piece played by Cage in a recording made in 1976 at the Center for Contemporary Music at Mills College in Oakland, California. The curation commentary that surrounds it provides the story of its creation. The choreography was named *Second Hand* because of the circumstances of its alteration following the denial of authorization by Satie's copyright holder, Max Eschig Publications. It is also noted that it is at this period that Cage began suffering from arthritis in his hands and slowly started playing less. Later, he would develop the piece in an arrangement for orchestra and another for solo violin.

In her anthology of these commentaries (on quotation, creative constraints, and concretism) titled *Unoriginal Genius*—which begins with Benjamin's *Arcades Project* and ends with Kenneth Goldsmith's *Traffic*—Marjorie Perloff discusses Antoine Compagnon, who raises two ideas in *La seconde main ou le travail de la*

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[78] Craig Dworkin: *The UbuWeb Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, John Cage, "Cheap Imitation." http://www.ubu.com/concept/cage_cheap.html

citation.[79] The first highlights the richness of quotation, which both lessens and adds, and the second suggests calling "the language of quotation" a form of rewriting.

Rauschenberg, Erased De Kooning Drawing (detail)

The lessening is of course problematic and can destabilize both the source and the original author, who can in a sense be literally erased. A key example in the visual arts is Robert Rauschenberg's 1953 *Erased de Kooning Drawing,* a piece which, according to Craig Dworkin, leads back to a Dadaist performance during which Breton traced, then immediately erased, some lines drawn by Picabia.[80] Here, de Kooning agrees to give Rauschenberg the drawing so that it will be erased, at a time when de Kooning is at the height of his fame and Rauschenberg is relatively unknown. In this operation, a trace of the drawing remains and the two artists are forever tied in this double effacement, in which the drawing is erased but its trace and frame remain, and what replaces it is an absence. This absence allows its authority to remain beyond the negativity of the gesture that affirms the arrival of a new generation but places it in debt to its role models.

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[79] Marjorie Perloff, *Unoriginal Genius: Poetry by Other Means* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 2010). Perloff refers to Antoine Compagnon, *La seconde main ou le travail de la citation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), 29. *Unoriginal Genius* opens with Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project*, trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin (Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press, 2002) and ends with Kenneth Goldsmith, *Traffic* (Los Angeles: Make Now, 2007).

[80] Craig Dworkin, *No Medium* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2013), 41.

2.2. Paying attention

Two years earlier, Rauschenberg had exposed the *White Paintings*, white monochromes that were like receptacles capable of reflecting not only light and shadow, but also the density of the public in front of them as well as all kinds of projections—including, no doubt, mental ones. To explain them Rauschenberg declared at the time, *"My art is just about paying attention."* This focus on attention rather than on the object centralizes the relationship to art rather than the interpretation of what is depicted, since the image in this case is absent. John Cage has always claimed the *White Paintings* as the main influence on the creation of his *4'33"* (Silence) the following year. This work in three movements, written for piano but consisting of no notes, was created, and here we can say performed, by the virtuoso pianist David Tudor, who transposes and codifies the conceptual score by marking the passage of movements through closing the lid over the keyboard. The setup is thus one of a music concert that embodies the attention paid to it; the audience listens. All audible sounds are included in the recording.

In "Composition as a Process," his conference in Darmstadt in 1958, Cage defined silence as an element of music in that it separates two sounds or two groups of sounds, but he also suggested making it into matter, sonic matter for which the term "silence" denotes that which is not a musical expression.[81] Cage noted that "the nature of these [sounds] is unpredictable and changing."[82] He was seeking to introduce into the highly codified art form that is music an unpredictable variable that reflects the location, the moment, and the ungraspable murmur of the living.

Cage and Rauschenberg's actions are exactly contemporary with those in

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[81] John Cage, "Composition as a process," lecture given in Darmstadt (1958), reprinted in John Cage, *Silence: Lectures and Writings* (Middletown, CT: Wesleyan University Press, 1961). One section was also published in The Village Voice in 1958 http://pg2009.files.wordpress.com/2009/08/composition-as-process-by-john-cage.pdf

[82] Ibid.

the films of the pre-Situationist *lettristes* in France, without there being any influence in either direction. Gil J. Wolman's *Anticoncept* and Guy Debord's 1952 *Hurlements en faveur de Sade* include substantial moments of black or white images that destroy the figurative conventions of cinema and divert the medium of film into a political manifesto through a radically formalist work.

2.3. From visual arts to poetry

called silence on-
ly because they
do not form part
of a musi-
cal intention)
may be depen-
ded upon to
exist. The world
teems with them, and
is, in fact, at
no point free of
them. He who has
entered an an-
echoic cham-
ber, a room made
as silent as
technologi-
cally possible,
has heard there two
sounds, one high, one
low—the high the
listener's ner-
vous system in
operation,
the low his blood
in circula-
tion. There are, dem-
onstrably, sounds
to be heard and
forever, giv-
en ears to hear.
Where these ears are
in connection

with a mind that
has nothing to
do, that mind is
free to enter
into the act
of listening,
hearing each sound
just as it is,
not as a phe-
nomenon more
or less approx-
imating a
preconception.

¶What's the histo-
ry of the chan-
ges in my com-
position means
with particu-
lar reference
to sounds? I had
in mind when I
chose the sounds for
*Construction in
Metal* that they
should be sixteen
for each player.
The number six-
teen was also
that of the num-
ber of measures

of four-four in
each unit of
the rhythmic struc-
ture. In the case
of the structure
this number was
divided four,
three, two, three, four;
in the case of
the materi-
als the gamuts
of sixteen sounds
were divided
into four groups
of four. The plan,
as preconceived,
was to use four
of the sounds in
the first sixteen
measures, intro-
ducing in each
succeeding struc-
tural unit
four more until
the exposi-
tion involving
all sixteen and
lasting through the
first four units
was completed.
The subsequent
parts, three, two, three,
four, were composed

COMPOSITION AS PROCESS/23

A page from John Cage's Silence: Lectures and Writings (1961)

Kenneth Goldsmith has said that it is because of Cage's book *Silence: Lectures and Writings*, which includes "Composition as a Process," that he abandoned the visual arts in favor of poetry. In the 1980s, following his studies at the Rhode Island School of Design, Goldsmith was becoming a recognized artist

in New York, as the author of this article recounts: "'What I had become was a businessman,' Goldsmith says. […] He remembered a book from his college days: *Silence*, the 1961 collection of lectures and essays by avant-garde composer John Cage. 'I began seeing that there was a whole other way to be an artist in the world other than that which I was taught. Cage gave me license to become an artist by doing less and saying less and fearing less.'" [83] This admission echoes something Goldsmith wrote in 1995, a review of *John Cage: Composed in America*, which is based on the idea that there is a fundamental difference between the world of art, with its merchandizing, and the option of writing as art in the wake of the Language Poets, who had turned writing into an area of formal experimentation and social and philosophical inquiry. [84] Here, Goldsmith contrasts Cage and Warhol as the representatives of these two positions, where Cage represents poetry in opposition to commercialism.

> Through the 1980s, Cage's influence was felt in the underground, influencing many of the more interesting cultural movements of that decade—the birth of indy rock, the renewal of Conceptual Art, and the rise of Language Poetry. Many of these artists studied Cage in the 60s and 70s and went on to synthesize newer aesthetic/cultural concerns with older Cageian ideals. While the 80s played out in the media with Wall Street Yuppies and decadent consumerists grabbing the spotlight, many of us spent time on the edge of the culture, sowing the seeds for the more politically charged times in which we now live. […] [Cage] had a sense very early on about how to use Media to his advantage (his close affiliation with Marshall McLuhan was no coincidence). Perloff discusses Cage's rewriting of his own and Duchamp's history (through the mesostic work "Alphabet") to have us see Cage as Cage wanted us to see him. Cage was Warholian in this way but in my opinion (and many will surely disagree with me), Cage was sacrificing/altering his ego in order to show

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[83] Studio 360, "Aha Moment: Kenneth Goldsmith and John Cage" (August 9, 2013). http://www.studio360.org/2013/aug/09/aha-moment-kenneth-goldsmith-john-cage/

[84] Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman, eds., *John Cage: Composed in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

us an alternative way to live and be in the world, whereas Warhol was complicit with the economic and ethical systems of Capitalism. So in a way, Cage's media manipulation was forgivable—showing us a higher good—whereas Warhol's manipulation showed us a mirror of our ugly selves and seemed offer [sic] no alternative.[85]

One detects a political statement in Kenneth Goldsmith's change of career. Poetry is described as an activity that escapes reification and can comment on commercialism from the sidelines since there is no chance of it falling victim to it. Poetry derives from another gift economy, a site of utopian expression—minimal as it is—and of action, subject to its generative constraints. Goldsmith explains that freedom resides in the margins. This is in line with what Charles Bernstein had said when asked why poetry was important: "Poetry is not important. That's why it matters."[86]

However, Warholian impurity is not rejected for all that, in that it expresses society at its most noisy and chaotic, underlying that not all sounds have a place in Cage's work. Taking up the same metaphor twenty years later, Goldsmith explains, "I find that Warhol took Cage's ideas much further. And although the results aren't as pretty (or ethical), I feel that Warhol truly accepts the quotidian world—with all its lumps and bruises (as well as beauty)—into his work. He was completely permeable in ways that Cage could only theorize. My own work has tended recently to move more toward the Warholian model than to the Cagean."[87]

What kinds of work did Goldsmith make when he was still a sculptor? He was actually already making books, just sculpted ones. One of them, in metal, contained its own oxymoron: a giant sculpture of the cult book and guerilla

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[85] Kenneth Goldsmith, review of Marjorie Perloff and Charles Junkerman, eds., *John Cage: Composed in America*, RIF/T Electronic Poetry Center, SUNY Buffalo, Summer 1995. http://epc.buffalo.edu/rift/rift05/revi0501.html

[86] "Charles Bernstein Interview with Romina Freschi," Buenos Aires, June 2005. http://www.greeninteger.com/green_integer_review/issue_1/Charles-Bernstein-interview.htm

[87] Kenneth Goldsmith and Francisco Roman Guevara, *Kenneth Goldsmith in Conversation* (Manila: De La Salle University Publishing, 2014).

manual of counter-culture, Abbie Hoffman's 1971 *Steal This Book*, which could of course not be stolen given how large and heavy it was. As Goldsmith reportedly commented, "The idea was like the revolution that never got off the ground."[88] He imagined himself posing for a picture next to it, with himself and Abbie Hoffman on either side, but Abbie Hoffman would take her own life in 1989, before this wish could be realized. UbuWeb hosts a video of a 1986 television program that shows a debate between Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, both former leaders of the 1960s counter-culture movement, who during this period represented and staged in oratorical jousts the rift which they would come to symbolize, Yippie vs Yuppie.[89]
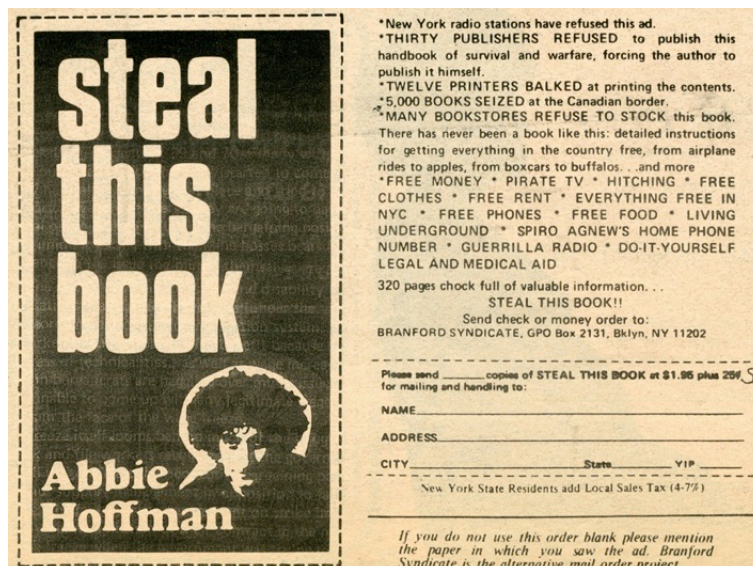
2.4. Appropriation and the circle of influence

In a now quite old article that surveys famous cases of literary appropriation, "Gathered, Not Made: A Brief History of Appropriative Writing," Raphael Rubinstein shows that the span of examples considerably exceeds the

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[88] See John Strausbaugh, "Sculpting With Words: It Figures," New York Press, May 14-20, 1997. http://epc.buffalo.edu/authors/goldsmith/strausbaugh.html

[89] On Abbie Hoffman's UbuWeb page, http://www.ubu.com/film/hoffman_yippie.html

contemporary technological frame.[90] In *Les chants de Maldoror*, the Comte de Lautréamont transcribes lengthy passages from the *Encyclopédie Histoire Naturelle* of 1864; in the 1964 work *Kodak*, Blaise Cendras silently borrows passages from Gustave Le Rouge's *Docteur Cornelius* to prove the literary power of this writer considered at the time to be minor; in the 34th chapter of *Hopscotch* (1963), Julio Cortazar juxtaposes his own work and an old unknown novel by interweaving lines from each. This preempts Derrida's *Glas* (1974), which combines an analysis of Hegel with a series of quotations from Jean Genet. Each reader can explore how paired texts cross-pollinate, shed light, or challenge or ignore each other.

In another pooling, Clark Coolidge's *Smithsonian Deposition* (1980) compiles 30 sources ranging from Jean-Luc Godard to Robert Smithson. Coolidge considers the poet to be a "sublime interrupter." In Rubinstein's words, "Like the great be-bop musicians, Coolidge takes a found phrase and draws out of it endless, wildly inventive variations."[91] In 1973, one of the protocols of Oulipo sought to introduce Definitional Literature, which would produce a text in which each word would be replaced by its dictionary definition: "If taking words from the dictionary is considered as 'appropriation,' then every word we write could be said to come from another source."[92] This protocol also reminds us of the works of Joseph Kosuth, such as *One and Three Chairs* (1965), which offers in installation form the juxtaposition of a chair, a photograph of the chair, and the definition of the word chair from a dictionary, or *One and Three Shadows* (1965), which extends this problematic protocol to a substance and not an object. The similarity between Oulipo and conceptual art is often stated in American works that cite the influence of conceptual poetry.

In *Against Expression: An anthology of Conceptual Writing*,[93] a book edited by Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith and a sister anthology to Craig

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[90] Raphael Rubinstein, "Gathered, Not Made: A brief History of Appropriative Writing," http://www.ubu.com/papers/rubinstein.html originally published in *The American Poetry Review* (March-April 1999).

[91] Ibid.

[92] Ibid.

[93] Craig Dworkin and Kenneth Goldsmith, eds., *Against Expression: An Anthology of Conceptual Writing* (Evanston: Northwestern University Press, 2011).

Dworkin's *UbuWeb Anthology of Conceptual Writing*, we find Cendras' *Kodak (documentary)* and Oulipo creations by Raymond Queneau and George Perec—Queneau's is an extract from *Fondements de la littérature*, in which he replaced the words "point," "line," and "plane" in David Hilbert's 1927 *Foundations of Mathematics* with "word," "sentence," and "paragraph," respectively,[94] and Perec's is his *Tentative d'inventaire des liquides et solides que j'ai ingurgités au cours de l'année mille neuf cent soixante quatorze*, a long list of the gastronomic curiosities he consumed during that year, listed by name.[95] Queneau and Perec stand alongside the American artists of historical conceptual art, like Joseph Kosuth's archaeological work *Purloined: A Novel*. This is a collection of pages photocopied from novels, one from each book used and each visibly different in its layout and typeface; once bound in a single repaginated book, it conjures the Harlequin romance genre, thereby functioning as a study of genre and its conventions, of repetition and variation.[96] The succession of different pages form a story which, although we know makes no sense, reads rather easily, like all of the novels that it borrows from. Another influential figure in this area, Andy Warhol, is represented by an extract from *a: A Novel* (1968). Several procedures had to be followed to create this book, beginning with the handling of its central subject, a portrait of Ondine, through the aggregation of conversations with him recorded by Warhol and totaling 24 hours. A long transcription process lasting two years would see a succession of transcribers, each imprinting his style on the finished whole. The transcriptions are published without corrections. In 1996, Kenneth Goldsmith revived some of these procedures in *Soliloquy*.

Underlining the proximity to Warhol, Raphael Rubinstein gave this description of Goldsmith: "Goldsmith appears at first to be assuming a Warholian passivity to the world around him, but the rhythmic structures he establishes and the personal nature of his choices soon make the reader realize that even this

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[94] Ibid., "Raymond Queneau from *The Foundations of Literature*." The original French reads, "Je présente ici une axiomatique de la littérature en remplaçant dans les propositions de Hilbert les mots 'points,' 'droites,' 'plans,' respectivement par 'mots,' 'phrases,' 'paragraphes.'"

[95] [Attept to inventory the liquids and solids that I ingested during the course of the year nineteen seventy-four]. Published in *l'Infra-ordinaire* (Paris: Le Seuil, 1989).

[96] Extract of Joseph Kosuth, *The Purloined: A Novel* (Cologne: Salon Verlag, 2000).

extreme form of linguistic appropriation is permeated with personal vision."[97] Regarding the paradox of the concept of appropriation/creative constraints and its artistic realization, Kenneth Goldsmith confirms his interest:

> It's always been important to me to realize a project rather than just to propose it. There's something about actually having done it that I feel gives the project more weight, more credibility, more conviction than a mere cut and past. I went to art school and there I had a professor who insisted that when making a sealed pot of clay, that although invisible, the interior must be as perfect as the outside, thus projecting and radiating conviction and dedication from within. I try to take this attitude into writing, making me very much a craftsperson.[98]

2.5. Kenneth Goldsmith's books

The first books

The script of Simon Morris' 2007 documentary, *Sucking on* Words, is a good point of departure to describe some of Kenneth Goldsmith's early books. The film begins with one of Goldsmith's favorite sayings, Brion Gysin's 1959 comment that "Writing is fifty years behind painting." Next, each of the books is presented in sequence, the generative protocol is explained, and the author performs a reading, with each reading becoming a performance of sound poetry.

The first reading is of *Head Citations* (2002) and is sung. Christian Bök, a Canadian concept poet who is close to Goldsmith, describes him thus on the book's dust jacket: "This irreverent and amusing collection consists of over 800 'misheard' song lyrics, as compiled by poet Kenneth Goldsmith, 'The Napster of the malapropism who downloads the poetic genius of the masses as they croon to themselves in their showers.'"[99] He is a poetic genius who changes Bob Marley's

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[97] Rubinstein, "Gathered, Not Made."

[98] Personal email to the author, August 12, 2013.

[99] Christian Bök, in Kenneth Goldsmith, *Head Citations* (Great Barrington, MA: The Figures, 2002).

"I shot the sheriff, but I swear it was in self-defence" to "I shot the sheriff, but I swear I was in silky pants."

The following book, *111.2.7.93-10.20.96*, partly revisits a protocol tried by Claude Closky in *The First Thousand Numbers Classified In Alphabetical Order* (1989-92). Unreadable by virtue of the category of words chosen—i.e. numbers— the text draws all the more attention to its visual dimension. In this case, however, it is a collection (compiled between February 7, 1993 and October 20, 1996) of sounds, words, and phrases that end in the "r" sound, ordered alphabetically and in ascending order by the number of syllables.

It is thus both a visual construction and, when read, a series of phonemes. One hears interjections, word pairs and series, verses, and small stories. The reader's linguistic creativity is called upon to the same extent as the standard of literacy required for literary works. This literacy extends to spoken and borrowed language, regardless of whom it is borrowed from, and to all texts heard or read— or found; the material is united by the demands of the project's rules. This holds true until the very last entry, a whole short story by D.H. Lawrence, "The Rocking-Horse Winner" (1926), a fable that reproduces the imaged language of fairytales. Chosen because of the terminal "r" in "winner," it consists of 7228 syllables.

In this work, then, there is no longer a poet speaking to a public, but rather a circle, a distribution of language that gathers readers and writers on the same axis. It is a piece of writing that is compiled from heterogeneous material but whose common element is the phoneme. But this experimentation, which shares a premise with structural linguistics—that the phoneme is the smallest linguistic component—fails, according to Goldsmith, because it will not be read. In fact, reading is in a sense optional to enjoy the idea of the book, which bears a similarity to a creative piece that could be visual or audio. The existence of this paradoxical object (which extends beyond, or even contradicts doxa, the a priori definition of categories in Barthes' terms) is known as poetry.

A, a, aar, aas, aer, agh, ah, air, är, are, arh, arre, arrgh, ars, aude, aw, awe, Ayr, Ba, ba, baa, baaaahh, baar, bah, bar, bard, bare, barge, barre, Bayer, beer, bere, beurre, bier, bla, blah, Blair, blare, blear, bleh, blur, boar, board, Boer, boor, bore, bored, Boz, bra, bras, Brer, brrrr, bur, burr, C.O.R.E., ca, cah, car, card, care, caw, cha, chaar, chair, char, chard, chaw, cheer, cheere, Cheers, Cher, chiere, choir, chord, chore, Claire, claw, clear, cleere, coeur, Coors, cord, core, corps, course, craw, crore, cur, curr, curs, czar, d'or, da, där, dare, daw, dawed, dear, deer, derre, dire, diur, door, dor, dore, dour, draw, drawe, drear, droor, duh, dure, dyere, e'er, ear, eere, eh, Eh?, eir, 'er, Er, er, ere, err, eyr, fa, fä, fair, faire, far, fas, faugh, fawe, fayre, fear, fer, fere, ferre, fier, fiord, fir, flair, flaw, fleer, floor, flour, floure, foiah, for, för, force, Ford, ford, fore, fors, four, IV, foure, fra, frere, frore, fur, fyr, ga, ga', gah, gair, gar, gaw, gear, geere, giour, gnar, gnaw, goore, gore, gourd, grah, grarh, gras, graw, grrrr, Grrrrr!!, guard, gyre, ha, haah, hah, Hair, hair, här, hard, hare, harr, harre, haw, hawe, hear, heer, heere, heir, her, here, herr, hir, hire, hoar, hoard, horde, hors, hour, houre, huh, Huh?, hurr, hwor, ia, ier, ire, ja, jaar, Jah, jar, jaw, Jaws, jeer, ka, kar, ker, kir, kna, knar, knarre, knur, Kurd, la, La!, lair, lard, lare, laud, law, lawe, lawed, Lear, leer, leh, lere, lier, Loire, loore, lor, Lord, lord, lore, lough, lourde, Ma, ma, mar, mare, Mars, Maude, maw, mawe, mere, mha, mire, mirre, moi, Moor, moor, moore, more, mors, moure, mwa, myre,

A lot like having Helen Keller verify your TV tint adjustments you addle-brained 'footer, after the reading he came up to me and said "I never realized that you had so many good lines there", and a Spotted Owl activist chained to an old-growth pear makes one wish to be a garbage collector, and although we'd only met and chatted for six hours when it came time to part I already missed her, and anyways I read this great book this afternoon about Barnett Newman that made me feel better, and just the thought of tofu cheesecake covered with a sticky gooey blueberry sauce makes me shudder, busted a fat ass half-Cab over it first try on a Shut Shark with a three inch nose. He had big hair, but as he opened his mouth the piece of meat fell out dropped in the water and was never seen no more, dipped in Ram's phlegm and then packaged in meat conveniently cut out from a head of a dead howler, Do you think about time trying to figure out how to get more and more of it viewing it as "yours"?, dreary small rooms and a common shower and toilet that looked like it was something out of the Lager, Duccio came not by usura nor Pier della Francesca Zuan Bellin' not by usura, duct tape is like the force — it has a light side and a dark side and it holds the universe together, Ever humped an inanimate object like a pillow liver hole in the wall sausage banana?, Gabriele d'Annunzio the pseudonym of Gaetano Rapagnetta (1864 —), he added that many women insist on using Saran Wrap when he goes down

297

This recalls the John Cage of the *Williams Mix* (1952), a piece to which Cage devoted five whole months to cutting up audio tapes of previously recorded sounds, with over a dozen people assisting in the development, classification, and cutting up of the recordings. "Each box represented a category of sound: urban, rural, electronic, manually produced, wind produced (including voice), small (requiring amplification to be heard). The sounds were further classified by duration and loudness."[100] While *111.2.7.93-10.20.96* is organized around alphabetical order and the number of syllables, in Cage the lengths of clips are chosen arbitrarily by I Ching draw. But in both cases the order is dictated by a randomness that becomes the creator of the assembled whole and the effects it produces—unprecedented in conventional forms or familiar series.

Alphabetical order is also the organizational principle chosen for the list of records that Goldsmith owns, the subject of his second book, *6799*, in 1994, the title of which is the total number.

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[100] Kenneth Silverman, *Begin Again: A Biography of John Cage* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2010). [1957, Kindle version]

A Kombi *Music to Drive By*, A Tribe Called Quest *Midnight Madness*, A Tribe Called Quest *People's Instinctive Travels and the Paths of Rhythm*, A Tribe Called Quest *The Low End Theory*, Abba *Greatest Hits*, Peter Abelard *Monastic Song*, Absinthe Radio Trio *Absinthe Radio Trio*, AC DC *Back in Black*, AC DC *Dirty Deeds Done Dirt Cheap*, AC DC *Flick of the Switch*, AC DC *For Those About to Rock*, AC DC *Highway to Hell*, AC DC *Let There Be Rock*, Johnny Ace *Again... Johnny Sings*, Daniel Adams *Caged Heat 3000*, John Adams *Harmonium*, John Adams *Shaker Loops / Phrygian Gates*, John Luther Adams Luther *Clouds of Forgetting, Clouds of Unknowing*, King Ade Sunny *Juju Music*, Admiral Bailey *Ram Up You Party*, *Adventures in Negro History*, Aerosmith *Toys in the Attic*, After Dinner *Editions*, Spiro T. Agnew *Speaks Out*, Spiro T. Agnew *The Great Comedy Album*, Faiza Ahmed *Besaraha*, Mahmoud Ahmed *Ere Mela Mela*, Akita Azuma Haswell & Sakaibara *Ich Schnitt Mich In Den Finger*, Masami Akita & Zbigniew Karkowski *Sound Pressure Level*, Isaac Albéniz

Generative constraints can also be presented in the form of instructions:

- *Fidget* (2000), "A recording of every move my body made on Bloomsday, 1997, from the moment I woke up to the moment I went to sleep."[101]

> It is speculation to say that *Fidget* describes my body; instead it describe a body. That body is decidedly male but beyond that, it's a universalized body, one without emotion or feeling, a realm of pure description, which exists in no specific space. When I wrote the book, I wanted to create an anti-Beckettian idea of the body. In Beckett, the tramp in a ditch on the side of a road that struggles to turn over from his back to his belly is a metaphor for all of humanity's struggles. With *Fidget*, I wished to simply describe the body itself, to formalize it, making it closer to the motion studies of Muybridge; the body as a site of non-symbolic, pure movement. [102]

- *Soliloquy* (1996-2001), *"Every word I spoke for a week"*[103] was recorded on a tape recorder in the same way as Warhol accompanied Ondine in *a: A*

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[101] Bloomsday, a tribute to James Joyce, is observed on June 16, the day on which the events of *Ulysses* take place.

Sucking on Words, script, 2007.
http://traumawien.at/stuff/texts/goldsmith%E2%80%93sucking%E2%80%93script.pdf.

[102] Kenneth Goldsmith, *I look to theory only when I realize that somebody has dedicated their entire life to a question I have only fleetingly considered / Je ne me tourne vers la théorie qu'après avoir réalisé que quelqu'un a consacré toute sa vie à une question qui m'avait à peine traversé l'esprit jusqu'alors, 2012*. Bilingual French-English text, trans. Nicolas Garait, ed. Mathieu Copeland (Paris: Musée du Jeu de Paume, 2013).

[103] Ibid

Novel. Here the poet tracks his own words for a given amount of time (longer even than Warhol's—one week instead of 24 hours, which had in fact been sufficient to erase any sense of an organized composition and extract the subject from the chatter). The tape recorder stops automatically during silences, so only speech is reproduced. Among other things we hear Goldsmith's recollection of a conversation with Marjorie Perloff, theorist of American poetry and today a leading exegete of conceptual poetry, in a tone that recalls Andy Warhol's journal when he described meetings with people who were likely to commission him to paint their portraits (Warhol recounted the meetings over the telephone as a speech to his assistant who would then retranscribe the recording).

- *Day* (2003), *"A transcription of every word, letter or number that appeared in a copy of The NewYork Times from Friday September 1ˢᵗ 2000."*[104]

What is more obsolete than a daily paper that has already been published? And what do we actually do when we read a newspaper? Almost certainly a partial reading, glancing from one column to another depending on how much time we have; sometimes we give it a look only because it is the newspaper and we feel we should. A ritual or automatic process, at the intersection of the ordinary and the catastrophic. But here the reading is meticulous, because it is deconstructed by the "OCR-ization" of the text and transcribed onto a new medium.[105]

> When it was finished the published book was nine hundred pages long
> [...] While it sounds like any number of artists' books—the sort of thing
> Printed Matter is filled with—I chose not to circulate it in this arena.
> Rather I published it with a proper publisher of poetry and had it
> distributed in poetry circles; it was reviewed in poetry magazines and
> journals and is taught in English classes. Yet by taking a well-worn art-

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[104] Ibid.

[105] Darren Wershler, "Uncreative is the New Creative: Kenneth Goldsmith Not Typing," in "Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics," special issue, *Open Letter: A Canadian Journal of Writing and Theory* 12.7 (Fall 2005), guest-edited by Barbara Cole and Lori Emerson. http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/goldsmith/Goldsmith-Open_Letter.pdf

world gesture and placing it in another economy, it became a scandalous gesture. While the art has digested appropriation in the century since Duchamp's urinal, such strategies had never been tested in literature, and they made people very angry.[106]

A newspaper is also a highly historicized medium, cleverly devised to pace our reading and hierarchize information while making it all cohabit the same space. Ironically, this political construction appears most clearly when it is made to disappear. But as Kenneth Goldsmith points out in the documentary *Sucking on Words*, we cannot escape the rhythm of the language. "It's got love, it's got passion, it's got war, it's got hate, it's got heroicism, it's got peace, it's got greatness, it's got athleticism. I mean it's got the most amazing stories in the world and I think better stories than any fiction writer could ever possibly construct. This is the most interesting book in the world […] written every single day. A book, and this is McLuhan says this, every day a new book is written."[107]

Day, Traffic, Weather: a New York trilogy

Day bears similarities to *Traffic* and *Weather*. All three are made from mass-media material recuperated by transcription of disseminated speech. For *Day*, the *New York Times*; for *Traffic*, radio reports on New York end-of-week traffic jams; and for *Weather*, one-minute New York area weather reports on the radio station WINS.

In *Traffic*, the style of narration adds a note of humor to descriptions of situations: "Well, we could spend an hour talking about the Hudson River now because that could be the delay going back to New Jersey on the Harlem River Drive approach to the G.W. Bridge."

A calibrated flow, every ten minutes, retranscribes in nine-line paragraphs the anatomy of New York that emerges from the repeated reference to various hotspots. It is a portrait of New York that unites in one narration both those stuck

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[106] Goldsmith, Letter to Bettina Funcke.

[107] Goldsmith, *Sucking on Words*, 16.

in traffic and those listening to its report. When the text is created it is in part performative, since what is said can alter the behavior of motorists, but is also in a sense melancholic since those who make up the traffic jams are already prisoners and cannot escape. They just have to wait. It is the ritual of a city, which repeats at the beginning of each weekend.

In 2011 Kenneth Goldsmith was invited to the White House for a poetry celebration.[108] His amusing narrative of the event reveals the sudden attention he garnered during his reading of two extracts from *Traffic*, following two famous poems about the Brooklyn Bridge, Walt Whitman's 1856 "Crossing Brooklyn Ferry," which describes crossing the river by ferry at the very place where the bridge now stands, and Hart Crane's modernist piece of 1930. The text of *Traffic* vocalized becomes a poem celebrating New York; it is read very fast, at a comically fast pace, like a contemporary acceleration of the piqued but stubborn rhythm of these human flows. The speed of the reading cocoons the text into unified matter, making it seem like a substance in itself. What is said is subordinated to how it is said.

In *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Media*, Goldsmith describes three concepts from Guy Debord and the Situationists: the drift, "intentionally moving through our urban spaces without intention;" the diversion or *détournement*, "a way of taking objects, words, ideas, artworks, media, etc, and using them differently so that they become entirely new experiences;" and psychogeography, "a technique of mapping the psychic and emotional flows of a city instead of its rational grids… by creating new situations, such interventions were intended to be a catalyst for social change filtered through a reorientation of normal life.",[109]

[108] Evening of Poetry, May 11, 2011. Kenneth Goldsmith's reading is on YouTube, put online by PoetryFilmFestival.com http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hMSvrIPhA4Y In the afternoon he hosted a workshop on his practices with young people invited by Michelle Obama.

[109] Kenneth Goldsmith, *Uncreative Writing: Managing Language in the Digital Media* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), see 36-37.

situation construite	Moment de la vie, concrètement et délibérément construit par l'organisation collective d'une ambiance unitaire et d'un jeu d'événements.
situationniste	Ce qui se rapporte à la théorie ou à l'activité pratique d'une construction des situations. Celui qui s'emploie à construire des situations. Membre de l'Internationale situationniste.
situationnisme	Vocable privé de sens, abusivement forgé par dérivation du terme précédent. Il n'y a pas de situationnisme, ce qui signifierait une doctrine d'interprétation des faits existants. La notion de situationnisme est évidemment conçue par les anti-situationnistes.
psychogéographie.	Etude des effets précis du milieu géographique, consciemment aménagé ou non, agissant directement sur le comportement affectif des individus.
psychogéographique	Relatif à la psychogéographie. Ce qui manifeste l'action directe du milieu géographique sur l'affectivité.
psychogéographe	Qui recherche et transmet les réalités psychogéographiques.
dérive	Mode de comportement expérimental lié aux conditions de la société urbaine : technique du passage hâtif à travers des ambiances variées. Se dit aussi, plus particulièrement, pour désigner la durée d'un exercice continu de cette expérience.
urbanisme unitaire	Théorie de l'emploi d'ensemble des arts et techniques concourant à la construction intégrale d'un milieu en liaison dynamique avec des expériences de comportement.
détournement	S'emploie par abréviation de la formule : détournement d'éléments esthétiques préfabriqués. Intégration de productions actuelles ou passées des arts dans une construction supérieure du milieu. Dans ce sens il ne peut y avoir de peinture ou de musique situationniste, mais un usage situationniste de ces moyens. Dans un sens plus primitif, le détournement à l'intérieur des sphères culturelles anciennes est une méthode de propagande, qui témoigne de l'usure et de la perte d'importance de ces sphères.

13

culture	Reflet et préfiguration, dans chaque moment historique, des possibilités d'organisation de la vie quotidienne ; complexe de l'esthétique, des sentiments et des mœurs, par lequel une collectivité réagit sur la vie qui lui est objectivement donnée par son économie. (Nous définissons seulement ce terme dans la perspective de la création des valeurs, et non dans celle de leur enseignement).

The definitions of the Internationale Situationniste (1958) as they were published in the first twelve issues of their magazine, all of which are accessible on UbuWeb[110]

Getting lost, creating disorientation, being more observant than usual—all these Situationist protocols used to transform daily life can be found in these rewritings of what is already-published and already-occurred, but newly considered.

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[110] In the Historical section http://www.ubu.com/historical/si/index.html *Internationale Situationniste*, ed. G-E Debord (Paris, 1958-69).

Weather, published in 2005, takes as its point of departure what we might call anecdotal material, since it consists of transcriptions of one year's worth of radio weather reports in New York. Critical analyses of *Weather*, however, highlight the work's complexity. Steven Zultanski notes, for example, the truth and integrity of this category of information in the very simplicity of its object, informing a population of the weather conditions affecting its immediate reality.[111] However, it also incorporates an ideology, which emerges when, during the course of the year, the war in Iraq begins, and the weather in combat zones, critical for military operations, is added to that of New York—making this globalizing move natural to the audience's ear. American history and politics are thus registered, and their significance emerges as soon as the transcription takes place, freed from its earlier factual finality. The medium and the message are thus separated, such that the McLuhanian catchphrase "The medium is the message" is deconstructed, giving voice to the medium's ideology.

Marjorie Perloff had previously used *Weather* to describe how America entered the war on the first day of Spring 2003, thanks to a lull in the sandstorms but before the dry season, which would present difficulties for the army on Iraqi soil.[112] She also compares the organizing principle of the text to John Cage's *Lecture on the Weather*, commissioned in 1976 for the US bicentenary, which consisted of random readings by 12 people of brief excerpts from Thoreau's *Walden*, *Journal*, and *Essay on Civil Disobedience* in a performance that also included a sound recording evoking wind and rain and a film that "consists of fragments of Thoreau's drawings, printed in negative, the projection of which resemble lightning at night."[113] By Goldsmith's admission, his book is a tribute and an echo.

Craig Dworkin reminds us that Vito Acconci had used weather reports as texts in his early work, when he was focused on writing, as we see in "Act 3,

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[111] Steven Zultanski, "Kenneth Goldsmith's American Trilogy," *Rain Taxi* 13.3 (Fall 2008) http://wings.buffalo.edu/epc/authors/goldsmith/rain-taxi-trilogy-2008.html

[112] Marjorie Perloff, "'Moving Information': On Kenneth Goldsmith's *The Weather*," in *Kenneth Goldsmith and Conceptual Poetics*, ed. Lori Emerson and Barbara Cole.

[113] A description of the piece, as well as descriptions of all of Cage's works, can be found online in the Database of Works http://johncage.org/pp/John-Cage-Work-Detail.cfm?work_ID=109

Scene 4," a New York telephone weather report from January 1969, given in in *Language to cover a Page: The Early Writings of Vito Acconci*.[114] Goldsmith had not been aware of these texts, so rather than a tribute, there was a form of echo and an appropriation of protocols occurring in the same conceptual tradition. This was the material chosen as ready-made by Acconci, who would next choose performance in public spaces as a venue for expression. And for Goldsmith this was an opportunity to echo both his environment acted on by others and described by established linguistic models and his point of view as the existential limit of all observation.

> In this way, all my works are autobiographical, being predicated upon framing devices which are expressive of the time in which I am living. In The Weather, for instance, all I had to do every day in 2003 was turn on the radio and tape. Yet the fact that the Iraq War was begun the first day of spring that year is where the historical and the autobiographical collide.[115]

Seven American Deaths and Disasters

Seven American Deaths and Disasters extends with greater precision the principle of media material's reuse to the vaster territory of American history. The title recalls *Death and Disaster* (1962), the Warhol prints based on press photographs. There are also the time capsules, boxes in which Warhol sealed objects of the period for a future he would never see—piles of magazines, such as the copies of the *Daily News* and *New York Post* (see illustration) that testify, beyond the material necessary for the production of the prints, to a fascination with the very form of this medium and its capacity to capture and proclaim the era.

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[114] Craig Dworkin, *Language to Cover a Page: The Early Writings of Vito Acconci* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2006).

[115] Goldsmith and Guevara, Kenneth Goldsmith in Conversation.

Time Capsule 232, date unknown, The Andy Warhol Museum, Pittsburgh

In the technical notes that accompany *Seven American Deaths And Disasters*, Goldsmith puts considerable emphasis on the unique features of transcription. This idea echoes the one expressed by Gregory Battcock (a close acquaintance of Warhol's) in the epigraph to *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology* (1984), which forms part of the books republished on /ubu in 2010, that the artist always lurks behind the image: "Before man was aware of art he was aware of himself. [...] In performance art the figure of the artist is the tool for the art. It is the art."[116] Elsewhere, Goldsmith refers to the Warholian idea of letting the camera roll for a long period without interruption once a frame and subject have been chosen. Having privileged elements of daily life for a long time, Goldsmith decides to turn his attention to the spectacular.

Seven American Deaths And Disasters brings together the transcription of several radio and television news programs relating to seven American tragedies, to which Goldsmith adds a declassified FBI document transcribing an emergency call made by a teacher in the Columbine massacre. The events are: the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and John Lennon, the explosion of the Challenger space shuttle, the Columbine massacre, the 9/11

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[116] Gregory Battcock and Robert Nickas, eds., *The Art of Performance: A Critical Anthology* (New York: E.P. Dutton, 1984), republished in 2010 on ubuweb.com, edited by Lucia della Paolera. http://www.ubu.com/historical/battcock/index.html

attack on the World Trade Center, and the death of Michael Jackson.

> as the motorcade began its trip toward the triple underpass at Elm and Houston, three bullets rang out, apparently fired from a thirty-thirty caliber rifle. The assassin supposedly was in a building about three or four stories up when he unleashed the deadly veil of bullets. We said deadly. That word was ill-advised. We will correct that. We do know, however, that the president and Governor Connelly, both riding in the presidential limousine were wounded. As they departed Love Field, the president and Mrs. Kennedy sat on the main back seat and Governor Connelly and his wife were on the jump seat. The Secret Service men and the chauffeur were in the front seat, but as witnesses stated, both men were prone in the vehicle. They did not bother with ambulances. The police escort made its way immediately to Parkland Hospital where top surgical specialists have been summoned. A call also has gone out for a priest. At this moment, word is that both men are still alive as of twelve fifty-five. The picture in downtown Dallas is one of extreme activity on the part of the police. There was that sudden call: all units report code three to the downtown area of Elm and Houston. They are trying to surround this building and close it off in case this man still would be there. He is approximately five feet, eight inches tall, weighs about one-hundred-sixty pounds, and is a white man. He was carrying a thirty-thirty caliber rifle.

Goldsmith revisits flux in the context of textual matter. By virtue of the brevity of each sequence, their juxtaposition creates a heightened emotional impact. Each narrative, itself constructed from several sources but put together from the same medium—radio, television, telephone—and rendered using the same technique—transcription—occupies a place with its own typography in this timeline of catastrophic narratives. The event progressively instills itself among songs and advertisements like a tear or laceration that very gradually contaminates the ordinary fabric of the station. The ordinary remains a counterpoint while the previously unseen seeks a way to formulate itself. It assumes the role of an ancient chorus that produces a collective event from its blind vantage point of shock. In the epitaph of the book, a quotation from Wittgenstein highlights this aspect: "The limits of my language are the limits of my world."

Capital

Capital is a book that has been in the making for several years. The project is a transposal of Walter Benjamin's unfinished *Arcades Project*, about 19th-century Paris, into a work on 20th-century New York. It consists of a collection of quotations, often from books borrowed from libraries. Benjamin's *Arcades Project* was a posthumous work compiled from materials collected between 1927 and 1940 and made up of quotations about Parisian life in the 1800s. The quotations are mostly from works in the Bibliothèque Nationale, categorized by theme. This is Jean-Michel Palmier's sensitive description of it in his book, itself unfinished, *Walter Benjamin: Le chiffonnier, l'Ange et le Petit Bossu.*

> A mythical book—Paris, capital of the nineteenth century; it is Walter Benjamin's theoretical apotheosis while simultaneously symbolizing his final defeat. The Little Hunchback, a character from fairytales—which he had made the negative principle of his existence, the symbol of the countless failures that punctuated it—awaited him in 1940, at the Spanish border, when with a group of refugees he tried to flee occupied France. His suicide in Port Bou, [...] a suicide that Brecht considered to be the first cultural victory of fascism, condemned the work to which he had devoted so many years to remain in note form. Yet these notes—long considered lost—were saved thanks to Georges Bataille, then librarian at the Bibliothèque Nationale, who ensured their safety after Benjamin had entrusted them to him. Then it was the patience and intelligence of Rolf Tiedemann, Adorno's student and coeditor of Benjamin's complete works, that allowed these plans, thousands of thoughts and quotes, to find a breath of life and become a book whose depth, strangeness, and beauty are unparalleled in contemporary philosophy.[117]

Jean-Michel Palmier also describes how, at the beginning of the 1920s,

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[117] Jean-Michel Palmier, *Walter Benjamin: Le chiffonnier, l'Ange et le Petit Bossu, Esthétique et politique chez Walter Benjamin* [Walter Benjamin: the Ragpicker, the Angel, and the Little Hunchback, aesthetics and politics in Walter Benjamin] (Paris: Klincksieck, 2006)

Benjamin's financial situation became critical. An impoverished intellectual sharing the fate of workers in crisis-stricken Germany, 1922 sees Benjamin obliged to sell some of his books; he calls 1923 an inhuman year. His exile in 1933 then dismantles the collection of books that he has, often ingeniously, put together. In her preface to a French translation of Benjamin's "Unpacking My Library," Jennifer Allen suggests, by invoking a 1940 letter to Adrienne Monnier, that this collection of quotations in some way replaces the lost books.[118] "Lacking the strength and courage to rebuild my collection," wrote Benjamin, "a change happened in me. Thanks to which, passions that used to be channeled towards objects I was obsessed by were directed instead to abstract research, towards the essence of the collection itself."

In *Capital*, the collection of quotations is constructed on the basis of equivalences; Robert Moses replaces Baron Haussman, Mapplethorpe takes the place of Baudelaire. The book's form will also echo its model's—the number of pages, layout, and so on—but the chapters will include, for example, Psychogeography; Graffiti; Brooklyn Bridge; Body, Hygiene, Pleasure, AIDS; Sex, Romance; Sound, Noise; Simulacra; Spectacle; Voyeur, Window, Mirror; Weather, Air Conditioning, Atmosphere; Reinvention, Invention; and Memory, Nostalgia.[119]

> Naturally, the flavor of my book is different than the original. New York in the twentieth century has a much glossier surface. In fact, it's all about surface: a city without history just coming into its own, beaming with optimism and jazz, Harlem, Madison Avenue, Andy Warhol, The New York Schools (music, art, dance and poetry), the skyscrapers, the influx of immigrant populations and so forth. It's a far cry from the dark psychological recesses and fervent socio-political battles of Paris in the

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[118] Jennifer Allen, "Preface" in Walter Benjamin, *Je déballe ma bibliothèque* (Paris: Editions Payot & Rivages, 2000), 12.

[119] Kenneth Goldsmith, "Rewriting Walter Benjamin's 'The Arcades Project'," April 30, 2011, on the "Harriet" poetry blog http://www.poetryfoundation.org/harriet/2011/04/rewriting-walter-benjamins-the-arcades-project/

nineteenth century.[120]

Tributes are also a dimension of appropriation, reviving the memory and persistence of a reading, a meeting, ideas, and stories.

Kenneth Goldsmith explains Walter Benjamin's *Arcades Project* on CNN in May 2014.[121]

Conceptual poetry is also discussed by its practitioners, leading to the emergence of theoretical texts via a search for definitions of poetry in these contemporary explorations, like a collection of current practices that can only exist in a given society. "Every age finds its own technique –Jackson Pollock (1951)" runs the epitaph to one of these exchanges. Christian Bök, to whom *Seven American Deaths and Disasters* is dedicated, picks up on a text by Darren Wershler:

> Poets may have to become advanced typesetters and computer programmers—technicians, polyglot in a variety of machinic dialects: HTML and Quark, PERL and Flash. Poets may have to learn the exotic

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[120] Ibid.

[121] "'The Internet has revolutionized reading,' U.S. poet Kenneth Goldsmith on why an unfinished book is his favorite book" http://edition.cnn.com/video/data/2.0/video/business/2014/06/03/spc-reading-for-leading-kenneth-goldsmith.cnn.html

jargon of scientific discourses just to make use of a socially relevant lexicon, and now that cybernetics has effectively discredited the romantic paradigm of inspiration, poets may have to take refuge in a new set of aesthetic metaphors for the unconscious, adapting themselves to the mechanical procedures of automatic writing, aleatoric writing, and mannerist writing—poetry that no longer expresses our attitudes so much as it processes our databanks.[122]

Some of the methods used to make UbuWeb, like the patching together of the "nude media" that "float around" and pass from one collector to another, can also be found in the protocols of these "non-creative" forms of writing. Ensembles of linguistic material can be made by recording and transcribing these recordings, whether the recorded speech is that of the actual author—as in *Fidget* and *Soliloquy*, or that of witnesses and commentators—as in *Traffic* or *Seven American Deaths and Disasters*. In either case, the result is intense description. *Fidget* is close in spirit to the person who describes an experience like that of Muybridge, who discovered the physical reality of movement only once this could be captured, broken down, measured, and rendered observable, when bodies had supplied a trace of their existence, ripped from the banality of action and descriptive invisibility by the machine and attendant protocols. Warhol movies like *Sleep* or *Empire* also reveal experimental observation, but distant contemplation becomes the condition of description, replacing scientific investigation.

The recording protocols used by Goldsmith in his conceptual poetry to capture events and places can also be found in the techniques used to construct UbuWeb. Whether through the redocumentarization of "nude media" or by republishing books, these techniques become contemporary options for cultural appropriation.

It is perhaps precisely in the field of cultural appropriation that evolutions in

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[122] Christian Bök. "After Language Poetry: 10 Statements", ed. Anders Lundgerg, Jonas (J) Magnusson and Jesper Olsson (Stockholm: OEI http://www.oei.nu/, 2001) http://www.ubu.com/papers/oei/bok.html

transcription mediums, as they appear in the digital paradigm, are led to produce such decisive ruptures. The following section sets out to identify some of the concrete effects surrounding this issue.

Part 3

Cultural Appropriation in the Digital Age

3.1. Phases of the Web

This next section focuses on the political stakes of UbuWeb as a publishing platform in the public arena. It is fascinating, as the digital world resolutely becomes a mass phenomenon and various new uses are becoming business norms, to look back on the development of the web in terms of content. (My starting point was based on the idea that UbuWeb's form had had to adapt to the evolution of its ecosystem.) I use the term 'web' because my principle concern is the space as we know and access it, based on an architecture made possible by Tim Berners-Lee, who combined several protocols to form the giant spider web that allows all connected computers to communicate with each other.

To begin with, this space, which is primarily a publishing space, could be approached as *terra nullius*, unexploited territory. The pioneers initially stored content, and this inaugural Web 1.0 is known as the documents web. Jean-Michel Salaün retraces the history of the idea of the document in *Vu, lu, su* (2012).

> In France, a network of more than 100 researchers from a range of disciplines, in the social sciences as well as in IT, explored the digital document. In order for their approaches to be as similar as possible, they edited the texts collectively under the pseudonym Roger T. Pédauque.[123] Using these postulates, and having added others, they came up with the following conclusion: 'A proto-document is a record allowing the interpretation of a passed event using the process of reading. A document is the representation on a medium of a proto-document, for easy manipulation, movement across space, and preservation over time.'[124]

The following phase, Web 2.0, takes its name from Tim O'Reilly's article, "What

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[123] *Roger T. Pédauque, Le document à la lumière du numérique* [The document in light of the digital] (Caen: C&F Éditions Caen, 2006).

[124] Jean-Michel Salaün, *Vu, lu, su. Les architectes de l'information face à l'oligopole du Web* [Seen, read, known. The architects of information in the face of the Web oligopoly] (Paris: La découverte, 2012).

is Web 2.0," published on September 30, 2005.[125] His subtitle was "Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software," in keeping with the reawakening of the IT industry following the bursting of the first bubble at the beginning of the century (which is how the article begins). A very telling sketch listed the changes between 1.0 and 2.0.

Web 1.0		Web 2.0
DoubleClick	-->	Google AdSense
Ofoto	-->	Flickr
Akamai	-->	BitTorrent
mp3.com	-->	Napster
Britannica Online	-->	Wikipedia
personal websites	-->	blogging
evite	-->	upcoming.org and EVDB
domain name speculation	-->	search engine optimization
page views	-->	cost per click
screen scraping	-->	web services
publishing	-->	participation
content management systems	-->	wikis
directories (taxonomy)	-->	tagging ("folksonomy")
stickiness	-->	syndication

In contemporary works that define the new paradigm which accompanied Web 2.0, the historiography of the web highlights the history of its counter-cultural roots, as if to preserve the values of its pioneers. Among the most interesting such books are Antonio Casilli's *Les liaisons numériques* and Dominique Cardon's *La démocratie internet*, both of which build on the French 'sociologie des usages,' sociological analysis of the uses of information and communication technologies.[126]

An archive such as UbuWeb, and many others belonging to the same movement (regardless of the context in which they began—amateur, university, or institutional of another kind) have gained authority over time and bear witness to the idea of the web as a publishing platform. In France, during the same period as UbuWeb was founded, the need for such a platform was perceived by the writer

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[125] Tim O'Reilly, "What is Web 2.0. Design Patterns and Business Models for the Next Generation of Software," September 30, 2005. http://oreilly.com/web2/archive/what-is-web-20.html

[126] Antonio Casilli, *Les liaisons numériques* [Digital liaisons] (Paris: Seuil, 2011); Dominique Cardon, *La démocratie internet* [The internet democracy] (Paris: Seuil, 2010).

and editor François Bon, who talks about it on his site and when interviewed.[127]

> For me personally, the adventure began with my very first experience of the web in 1996: I learned one could download Les Fleurs du Mal. In return, I offered the Swiss site that provided it my transcriptions of the original editions of Rabelais, and it all took off from there. I was very involved in this movement which, while the BNF [Bibliothèque Nationale de France] did not yet have a website, people were busy copying major texts to provide an initial locus for Francophone texts online.[128]

The normalization of its use can spur the web into once again being a creative space whose possibilities remain under-exploited.

In any event, publishing spaces have a tendency to hybridize through the different annotation/editorial practices enabled by social media. Above the level of content, a network of exchanges and new classifications gets woven, giving rise to other possibilities. These range from the various curating methods adopted by users and institutions to profiling with the aim of generating recommendations, and from community crowdsourcing to commercial marketing.

This change and its democratizing stakes were already anticipated, pre-web, at the time of Les Immatériaux, and were being discussed as early as 1987 by Bernard Stiegler in the exhibition and colloquium titled *Mémoires du futur − Bibliothèques et technologies* [Memories of the future—libraries and technologies].

> The computer and electronic recording devices reconfigure and intensify the capabilities of memory. They extend a process engaged with what was in its time a new technology: alphabetic writing. The memory is a product of a technique that evolves constantly. The smallest units of

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[127] "Où en sont les pionniers du net," [What are the internet pioneers up to now] Republished March 2011 from a January 2005 note, on his site *Tiers-livre* http://www.tierslivre.net/spip/spip.php?article69

[128] "François Bon, ultra-moderne éditeur, un entretien" [François Bon, ultra-modern publisher: an interview] by Emmanuel Tugny, January 23, 2013 http://blogs.mediapart.fr/blog/emmanuel-tugny/230113/francois-bon-ultra-moderne-editeur-un-entretien

meaning undergo transformation and their circulation accelerates; previously literal (that is, alphabetic), they became analogical and digital. The object of the exhibition 'Mémoires du future—Bibliothèques et technologies' is to present the main features of these evolutions and describe their consequences.[129]

Annotation practices, in particular, are currently in the process of being concretely established, and it has therefore becomes necessary to describe their history and impact, as Marc Jahjah has suggested:

> The transitivity of knowledge, while on the one hand appearing to be affected by the annotation process, that is to say, the meaning and values of a text, becomes reactivated, included in a set of instructions that turn reading into a scriptural activity, from which the reader would be hard pressed to escape. Thus ars excerpendi, the art of extracting or annotating, so dear to humanists, is both an art of reading and an art of space, promoted because it is the guarantee of ownership of this space and the channeled deployment of the reader's body, the marks of which are only produced in the very constrained space of the process of reading, which then converts them into valuable data and statistics.[130]

Web Studies are taking shape today through several disciplines, including empirical philosophy; in his thesis *Vers une philosophie du web* (of which an html version that can be commented on is available online), Alexandre Monnin asks how his discipline has itself been altered by the invention of the web.

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[129] From the press dossier for the exhibition *Mémoires du futur* (Centre Pompidou, 1987) curated by Bernard Stiegler.
http://www.centrepompidou.fr/cpv/ressource.action?param.id=FR_Rfb9bda2384869b88987af5c7eb1a367&param.idSource=FR_E-634a199630d857ea189a134fa87e184a

[130] Marc Jahjah, "'Reading life' de Kobo: dynamique de la table, de la note et de l'espace" [Kobo's 'Reading Life': dynamics of tables, notes, and space]
http://marginalia.hypotheses.org/9039 This research log, *Marginalia, savoir(s) d'annotateurs*, brings together the intellectual, material, bodily, temporal, and social processes, including to entire settings (institutional, legal, economic, industrial, and so on) that preside over annotation practices.

Before even assimilating the web to just any "medium," we witness the becoming or the resumption (which specifically needs evaluating) of philosophical concepts that include some of the most important that the tradition has bequeathed: object, proper noun, ontology. In their own way, each of these acquires a new life on the web in the form of technical artifacts: "resources," URIs, ontologies. Such a movement, which could never work in just one direction, also questions the status of concepts yanked out of their original contexts.[131]

Also in France, Louise Merzeau has put forward a mediology of digital usage that considers changes in documentary inscription, as well as the writing of metadata produced by the tools themselves, as marks or traces:[132]

More than in the physical storage of "traces," it is at the level of this indexability of content that from this point forward the choices regarding normalization, manipulation, and profits play out. Because of its self-referential tendency from the moment of its broadcast, digital data brings with it its accessibility and possibility of being archived. […] Always overflowing from sites of authorized production (schools, libraries, museums, institutions), networked memory gathers numerous collections that are more or less processed, structured, and documented.[133]

The issue of digital labor, the free work that everyone does in supplying the network, is highlighted and discussed by Trebor Scholz. "The social web appears to be free for us to use, but there are hefty social costs; oligarchs capture and financialize our productive expression and take flight with our data. We, the

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[131] Alexandre Monnin, Vers une philosophie du web : http://philoweb.org/

[132] see http://merzeau.net/

[133] Louise Merzeau, "La mémoire Toile," in "Les promesses de l'archive," *Poli (politique de l'image)* 6 (Paris: Poli Editions, 2012).

'users' are sold as the product."[134]

How can this value be taxed in such a way as to come back in part to those that create it? These debates will no doubt take on importance in proportion to a fall in the unfamiliarity that accompanies new applications, where the boundary between work and leisure is blurred, and where, more subtly, the dividing line between activity and exploitation zigzags. This production of collective value capitalized by its algorithmic patterns is fast becoming an active field of study.

The social and political implications of Web 2.0 are criticised by a whole current of thought, represented by figures such as Geert Lovink and his Institute of Network Cultures and followed by participants in networks such as Knowtex[135] and Muzeonum,[136] which immerses itself in these initiatives in order to document or promote them. The description of the interfaces and the historical and aesthetic conditions of their function have in any case been the object of serious study in Lev Manovich's wake. The trend in media archaeology, led by Jussi Parikka, among others, has also become very influential. In addition, new approaches are proliferating to take on the information web (big data, linked data, open data), which reconfigures the representation of public space. The big debates, such as on interoperability, standards, and net neutrality remain, but in a more constrained environment.

3.2. A history of UbuWeb

Kenneth Goldsmith describes the design of his site thus: "UbuWeb is a flat HTLM 1.0 site. There is no programming behind it, absolutely everything is written in BBedit by hand. You know I want to keep the site very basic, because what really is new is this radical sense of distribution."[137] This radical distribution

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[134] Trebor Scholz, *Digital Labor: The Internet as Playground and Factory* (New York: Routledge, 2013).

[135] http://www.knowtex.com/ (2009-2014) hosted by Nicolas Loubet, today co-founder of Cellabz http://www.cellabz.com/

[136] http://omer.mobi/notes/muzeonum launched in 2011, hosted by Omer Pesquer.

[137] "UbuWeb Vu: Kenneth Goldsmith," interview by John Jourden on June 26, 2007. http://archinect.com/features/article/59857

had to confront an evolution which transformed a thinly populated open space into one that bears a resemblance to public space, with its normalization and oversight. Darren Wershler, professor of both media and contemporary literature at Concordia University in Montreal, has been writing books about the internet for a dozen years, including *Free as in Speech and Beer: Open Source, Peer-to-peer and the Economics of the Online Revolution* (2002). The freewebber tendency at the vanguard of these debates on access to culture and civil liberties—in the wake of figures such as legal expert Lawrence Lessig or programmer Richard Stallman—has contributed to the battles about public space in the networked society. The Digital Humanities are perhaps the contemporary heirs of this initial operational environment.

In 2008, Darren Wershler wrote a history of UbuWeb by exploring what might be called its DNA—the conditions of its creation, its maintenance, its foundations, its different phases and adaptations, its relocations, and its growth. His article sheds light on the issues involved in moving the site between servers over the years, which were largely governed by its size and the difficulty of hosting it attendant on its substantial audiovisual content. Wershler's history also points out that its engineering benefits from advanced publishing and digital design capabilities as well as a university environment.

> What I'm going to argue is not merely that UbuWeb is the epitome of what amateur curatorial projects should be; its ongoing popularity demonstrates quite clearly that it is also the envy of many professional and academic online archives. [...]   UbuWeb is precisely the kind of site that contemporary digital cultural policy should be trying to produce (and is, perhaps, even the logical extreme of entrepreneurial web development), but it is also, paradoxically, precisely the kind of site that universities, businesses and governments have to officially disavow.[138]

UbuWeb highlights the difficulties for all online archives in adapting to individual

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[138] Darren Wershler, "UbuWeb and Aggressive Fair Dealing," May 2008, unpublished.

countries' copyright laws; there are always exceptions for pedagogical use, there is the problem of "imperfect" artifacts ("nude media") in the face of authorized editions, and they must understand the nature of the system put in place to create and maintain the site as part of the gift economy.

Darren Wershler notes that at the historical level, UbuWeb's age makes it an interesting case study because its existence precedes the tension around copyright issues and the supervision of the network that these entail; the US Digital Millenium Copyright Act dates from 1998.

From 1996 to 1998, there was only textual content on UbuWeb; in 1998, audio was introduced, and 2005 saw the addition of audiovisual material. Many complaints from publishers and lawyers then prompted the shutting down of the audiovisual section and then a slow reconstruction without the offending content. In this period, it was actually not uncommon for servers to be suspended merely because they contained MP3s and films—without these being so much as identified.

The creation of the site also coincides with Kenneth Goldsmith's involvement in the digital economy. During this period he contributed to the creation of a number of sites, including MoMA's. Many visual and experimental poets close to this group have a similar profile during this time, including Darren Wershler, who notes the extent of university involvement in the operation of UbuWeb—servers, contributors, and boards—as well as its use by universities. Today, UbuWeb is hosted by a school of art, design, media, and communication in Mexico called Centro [http://centro.edu.mx/CENTRO/]

3.3. Networks

Francesca Musiani researches networks through the history of peer-to-peer (P2P) file sharing. She reminds us that peer-to-peer is an often criminalized technology, like the exchange of copyrighted files with which it is linked, but that these technologies are today sometimes revived to create and counterbalance the organizational models of mass media currently in practice. Thus the capabilities

of the network linked to Web 1.0, which enabled different types of relationship between machines and people to those made possible by the networking of Web 2.0 in its industrial form, are today being reconsidered as models of relational systems and networks. This is most visibly the case in services linked to search engines, storage, social networks, and video streaming, all of which are heavily commercialized today. Musiani's work is therefore "a revisiting of the history of P2P to show how, by seeking the best ways to get around the specific problems where the architecture of the Internet is severely tested by current concentration scenarios, developers are turning back to the Internet of fifteen or twenty years ago, the first Internet which was created as a system of communication between machines of equal status, sharing resources with each other."[139]

Pioneering free-web publishing such as UbuWeb, have used the possibilities offered by the digital world and the web to inhabit a gray zone, on several occasions making files available that transgress authors' rights.

The new capitalist actors of the digital economy, the native conglomerates (Google, Amazon, Facebook, Apple—the big four known as GAFA) that organize themselves in silos to transform the web into a mass-media, have also forced new uses, often by cutting themselves free of the law and imposing a firepower and speed of execution that floods the gray areas left open by missing standards. Information and communication theorist Olivier Ertzscheid, for example, has looked at Google Books, a major example of this approach.[140]

The big commercial firms use the potential of the internet medium to store and distribute content by normalizing use in commercial circles. The new distribution models are also responses to pirate use. For example, music streaming sites respond to peer-to-peer file sharing by offering instant access to all licensed music. They then build profiles of their listeners to develop ways of making recommendations.

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[139] Francesca Musiani, *Nains sans géants. Architecture décentralisée et services Internet* [Dwarves without giants: decentralized architecture and Internet services] (Paris: Presses des Mines, Collection Sciences sociales, 2013).

[140] Olivier Ertzscheid, "Google Books: Le cours" http://affordance.typepad.com/mon_weblog/2012/05/google-books-le-cours.html published May 9, 2012.

3.4. The problems of cultural institutions

Located between the autonomy of the counter-cultural free-webbers and the business-minded organization of cultural content channels lie traditional cultural institutions. Cultural institutions are ultimately the most constrained in putting documents online—constraints that clash constantly with their pedagogical and knowledge-dissemination mission. These institutions must remain aware of legal issues and live under the watchful eye of publishers, who tend not to have a constructive dialogue with them when it comes to the complementarity of platforms and types of publication.

Exposure on the web via the websites of major cultural institutions is seen as one way among many of commercially exploiting documents (such as photographs and film clips) belonging to publishers. The web's possibilities as a publishing platform and media channel are thus feared (as competition) and misunderstood, and because of that, under-exploited. Documents are counted and their use tightly restricted, which can lead to limits on availability. The power of the web is therefore often strangled even before being properly explored.

Internet use evolves, and also depends on the power struggles, conversations, and relations between the producers of content and its publishers. In the making of event archives, for example, the problem arises in the retransmission of speech excised from a visual context. In the future this absurdity will no doubt become apparent, when all the archives produced this way look incomplete, redacted of all illustrations and examples and failing to transmit a large part of their meaning and reality. Do these records have to be considered like audiovisual productions subjected to the same fees as television or film documentary productions? Taking this risk into account, the Cinémathèque Française has since last year begun using "fair use" and exceptions for educational purposes to restore these events to a more accurate—though still incomplete—level (e.g. providing a section of the commented extract rather than simply excising any clips, which had been the previous solution) since it is legally

and financially impossible to reproduce exactly what took place.[141]

These new uses are fervently debated within cultural institutions. How to legislate a ban on taking pictures, for example, when you hope that exhibitions will be discussed in social settings (i.e. online)? André Gunthert, historian of photography and director of the contemporary visual history laboratory at L'école des hautes études en sciences sociales (EHESS), has seized on this question, identifying various functions of photography: "We can analyze use of photography in the museum setting as falling under three intersecting registers: the documentary, the reliquary, and the reflexive," extrapolating as follows to help explain the complexity of these practices that redefine the paradigm of the network:

> From this living development, so fragile and valuable, and linked to the memory of individuals capable of restoring its narrative, photography has become the preferred tool, essential both for making records and for sharing private experiences. Strongly promoted by digital technologies and the rise of conversation on social networks, this writing with pictures now invades every corner of communication tools. It is futile to think that we can thwart such a pressing social need, which the whole history of photography shows to be inexorably on the rise. An increasingly rare practice, forbidding photography creates holes in this visual memento as visible as the absence of a military site in an aerial photograph. Respect for the autonomy of the visitor's experience is achieved through his freedom to record things other than those exhibited. Contrary to what some solitary aesthetes believe, it is rare that the visitor wishes to reproduce the equivalent of store-bought postcards. More often, a couple, a family, or a group of friends want to preserve the memory of their relationship to a work, the imprint of a look, a conversation, or simply of a presence, which the context makes special. Taking this option away is

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[141] Author meetings with the Web Department of the Cinémathèque, July 2013 (Xavier Jamet, Nicolas Le Thierry d'Ennequin and Fréderic Benzaquen) and with Gilles Duffau, Director of New Media.

an act whose violence must be weighed up in proportion to the uniqueness of the lost opportunity.[142]

In order to deal with these changes and illustrate the system that institutions have to put in place to satisfy both the public and the copyright owners, there is, for example, the solution adopted by the Cinémathèque. At exhibitions, the signs warning that photography is forbidden remain, but the docents are instructed not to say anything if visitors take pictures with their phones. People are not, however, informed of this tacit permission. This is very recent, a response to visitors' negative comments on social networks about being prevented from documenting their own visits to exhibition spaces.[143]

Meanwhile, the material required for the cultural appropriation promised by the web is absent, so in this paradoxical era each institution has to invent its own solution to cope, especially in regards to content-sharing on social media. How can content that it is legal to circulate be commented on, i.e. reused in mash-ups or other manipulations? How can works be converted into documents to become the subject of cultural debate, exchange, or appropriation?

Another contemporary problem revolves around the conversation on social networks about institutions' mediation practices. The paradox here is between the desire to promote public engagement and the paucity of usable documents. There is more and more talk of social museums, social readings, and connected televisions (or second screens) to describe the uses of content and commentary on social networks, a channel of exegesis that extends cultural practices. The issue therefore centers on loosening rights so that a certain amount of content can circulate. This is one of the Pompidou Center's concerns regarding the use of its own site's resources: "An evaluation device will attempt both to see how people

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[142] André Gunthert, "La photo-souvenir monument de l'histoire privée," [The photo—souvenir testament to the private history] in *Visiteurs photographes au musée,* ed. Serge Chaumier, Anne Krebs and Mélanie Roustan (Paris: La Documentation Française, 2013). The article is also in his research log, L'atelier des icones, on the site culturevisuelle.org (a social media for teaching and research) http://culturevisuelle.org/icones/2659, published March 16, 2013.

[143] Update (March 2015): Since the completion of the present research, the French Ministry for Culture and Communication, taking into account the development of these new practices, has endorsed as of July 2014 "Tous photographes!" [All Photographers], a charter of "good practices in cultural institutions."

use content and to establish which tools would be most useful to them. In fact, it is not a priori possible, since uses change, to know what the public will do with these tools and what their goals are. In any case we will try to go further in the loosening of rights to allow shares that we cannot currently support because they are not legal."[144]

Chronophotographic tapes E-J Marey and G. Demenÿ (1890)
Catalogue of restorations and prints, La Cinémathèque Française

A certain militancy accompanies these changes in the academic world; where access to culture is concerned, humanist practices are strongly advocated. In her study, "Images of Works of Art in Museum Collections: The Experience of Open Access," Kristin Kelly analyzes museums and cultural institutions from the perspective of the documents available online, looking specifically at open access

[144] Gonzague Gauthier, Head of Digital Projects at the Pompidou Center, email to the author of February 3, 2013.

to the reproductions of works.[145] The study examines eleven British and American museums [146] and is produced by the "Council on Library and Information Resources" in Washington, D.C. It documents changes in how items are consulted and used (e.g. use of the web and document-sharing on social networks) through the institutions' own reports, and shows that although initially constrained by a conservative and very restrictive stance, with each ensuing year more items of better quality were being put online. At the outset, one of the criteria was making items available for educational purposes, which ended up creating a division between the documents available to researchers and those available to all. Nor was all content treated in the same way—it all depended on the providers concerned and whether access competed with commercial editions or those whose rights were held elsewhere.

Digitization of an analog collection invites reflection on the act of donation; the process also raises questions about how to take advantage of the communication potential of providing free and open access to digital artifacts. The catalysts in this process are very definitely people, their determination, and their knowledge of the issues; Kelly's report mentions some militant figures who are key to steering attitudes towards greater openness. The study also notes that these approaches have both philosophical foundations (the mission of sharing culture) and commercial considerations (the need to exist on the web). Institutions with libraries are at the vanguard of the movement since they are inherently invested in providing access to culture and their librarians tend to be educated on these issues. The study also concludes, perhaps counter-intuitively, that releasing images ultimately allows more control to be retained over them. Circulating a good quality image, properly indexed and linked to its source—such that it is curated in detail or at least correctly—gives the source better search engine placement on the one hand, and wider recognition in online conversations on the

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[145] Kristin Kelly, "Images of Works of Art in Museum Collections: The experience of Open Access," on the Council on Library and Information Resources (CLIR) website http://www.clir.org/pubs/reports/pub157/pub157.pdf

[146] The British Museum, Indianapolis Museum of Art, J. Paul Getty Museum, Los Angeles County Museum of Art, Metropolitan Museum of Art, Morgan Library and Museum, National Gallery of Art, Victoria and Albert Museum, Walters Art Museum, Yale Center for British Art, Yale University Art Gallery.

other.

This rather contentious investigation is among the most committed initiatives for large institutions in the Anglo-Saxon museum world, and thus positions itself as a beacon for other museums. The recommendation to give greater access to images acts as a catalyst, shrewdly analyzing evolving practices and systems by listing the points of both obsolescence and progress. This example also illustrates how practices are established in cultural institutions, with all their changes and trends, as well as moments where the status of documents and the conditions of their circulation, their publishing quality, and the critical tools that accompany them are reconsidered.

3.5. Public power and the current situation

In keeping with the direction suggested by these practical examples, I have found it interesting to observe how society has begun considering digital changes as concrete developments. By way of exploring this, I looked at two recent reports commissioned by the French government, the Lescure report "Mission de concertation sur les contenus numériques et la politique culturelle à l'ère du numérique" [Consultation on digital content and cultural policy in the digital age] (May 2013),[147] and the Collin and Colin "Rapport relatif à la fiscalité de l'économie numérique" [Report on the taxation of the digital economy] (January 2013).[148]

The Lescure report is based on a set of hearings that aimed to bring together some key players in "creative industries": producers, publishers, institutions, companies, and users. Released in May 2013, it marks a change in approach, but also points to irresolvable structural differences between a better assessment of the actual use of the digital system and increased protection of traditional industries (initiated by the aggressiveness of new players' distribution models and the demise of certain formats in an economy based on the analog object). The

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[147]http://www.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/var/culture/storage/culture_mag/rapport_lescure/index.htm#/

[148] http://www.economie.gouv.fr/files/rapport-fiscalite-du-numerique_2013.pdf

dematerialization of the object that took place during the conceptual period of art is echoed today in the massive digital turn witnessed in mediums of inscription and preservation.

All sectors of the creative industries seem to have participated in the same transition to new kinds of inscription mediums as well as in the rise of mostly American business models governing new uses. The transfer of value from cultural acquisitions to digital artifacts (by fee or subscription) is thus underway on existing offerings, both legal and illegal.

It is significant that the description of this state of affairs insists first and foremost on taking into account the very concept of transformation and the legal implications this has on procedures. "The concepts themselves must be refreshed. The language often needs to be revisited: editor, host, distributor, platform, media... all these terms have taken, in everyday parlance, a new sense that the law does not always grasp correctly," notes the report. Current questions regarding imbalances between the publishing and distribution functions are also touched upon: "Similarly, the artificial distinction between cultural industries and digital industries, which the hearings conducted by the commission repeatedly illustrated, must urgently be overcome: those who create and produce content and those who provide its dissemination and distribution should not be regarded as adversaries but as partners."

It is also an issue of relative scarcity; "practices of hoarding or of leaving things fallow, common in the era of physical distribution and analog broadcasting, are less and less justified"—uses inherited from earlier systems which "impoverish the cultural heritage" are highlighted and a "duty to maximize audiovisual works" is recommended in exchange for help with digitization. Furthermore, the system of help itself could be prompted to adapt: "Things designed to boost culture remain largely focused on creation and production and do not pay adequate attention to dissemination, particularly at the digital level."

The Colin and Collin report on digital taxation describes how the current web works in its technical and commercial modes. The authors' focus on web users' "free digital labor" sheds light on how users circulate content and add material, which in turn creates a basis for establishing the value of services and

platforms. "The incorporation of user data into the production lines of the digital economy contributes to blur the line between production and consumption. [...] The lack of remuneration for this 'free labor' contributes to the low marginal operating cost and explains the exponential returns to scale specific to the digital economy."[149]

It is worth noting how the gift economy of Web 1.0, of the pioneer publishers of the "document web" including a radical experiment in distribution like UbuWeb, finds a match in the free digital labor of Web 2.0 provided by services that organize the network of public space in the "data web" that we have today. The broader questions about the creation of value and the right to communication, as well as those relating to the gray area in which some of the new uses are being tested, show us that this gray area does not just involve pirates but also those in the commercial realm and goes along with the opportunities provided by current technologies.

For the big digital players, the mass-mediafication of the web aims to naturalize uses and freeze them into commercial standards. The massive changes in distribution systems was taken into account relatively late by the different sectors of individual creative industries, which were preoccupied, at first, with extending their model to the new paradigm. Initiatives for digital editions that complement traditional publishing media whose business models are still effective offer a status quo that is managed on a case by case basis. It is a reform movement that is taking root slowly and not without a certain amount of turmoil.

In conclusion

The aim of the present work was not to explore the social changes caused by progress in the digital realm; originating in Film Studies, it tries to describe a product of the web that has yet to be decisively defined. Discussed first in terms of collections and with a view to providing an analytical description, I looked at how UbuWeb has adapted to the history of its medium and material. This

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[149] Ibid., 52.

medium and material are a work in progress, normalizing themselves and modifying the representation of public space. The notion of public space and its political definition, that is to say how this definition is constructed and imposed, is at the root of my research. For the generation that has seen a new media gain ground in just a few years, and who was able to experience its first versions—learning as they went along and at times having to defend the principles of freedom—access to culture initially seemed destined for new heights. But no promise can depend on technology alone, and we have seen how these singular publishing initiatives had to deploy ingenuity just to continue to exist.

The definition of public space is an ongoing negotiation. The definition is never static, it is a land that needs to be inhabited by practices, discourses, and situations that get reinforced on the basis of concrete propositions. These propositions are often experiments that ultimately leave their mark and produce new fields, open paths, and clear spaces.

On UbuWeb, it is not the collection itself that is revolutionary, but the fact that it is open and in circulation. It was necessary to push it into the public space without yielding to intimidation, hacks, and the discouragement that this type of activity can bring, to clear a sometimes contested existence amid standardized objects. Although, on reflection, none of the objects on the web is really standardized; they are all the result of the history of their content and how this was uploaded, as well as skills imported from various fields. This narrative will become more accurate as reflection on these objects becomes its own field.

For UbuWeb—to come back to the story of a roving object that has become progressively more complex and more impressive, intermittently requiring new servers and hosts—we can see how hosting could sometimes be problematic for the institutions concerned. But we have also seen that it is not alone, that it is part of a set of outsider collections which in some cases have found a more permanent archival role. UbuWeb is also part of a series of more structured projects attached to trends in the Digital Humanities for which the uploading of cultural or artistic content depends on research to provide high-level document collections by taking advantage of the web's opportunities for conservation, access, exposure,

distribution and contribution.

UbuWeb's creator does not, however, want to deal with the archival limits of his site; the magistrates of time will no doubt see to that. Efforts to maintain and develop it in line with its initial momentum partly contradict his assertion—but it is a fact often repeated and perhaps key to the vitality of the collection—that "UbuWeb is temporary and will one day soon vanish altogether. Download what you need now. You've been warned!"[150] Although Kenneth Goldsmith is aware that his site raises broader questions about access to knowledge and the network's publishing opportunities, and although he got involved so that his site would appear and maintain itself as a model and resource in the educational world, he currently insists that UbuWeb be considered a peculiar, fragile, untainted contribution. But this is not, of course, enough to remove from it the sum of practices and knowledge that it has mobilized in order to exist.

> The path leading from the book to the text crosses a landscape of literacy practices, confident or cautious, unregulated or authorized, for private use or to define reading standards for an entire society. These practices take root in a place, mobilize participants, manipulate artifacts, and become part of traditions. In their diversity, they can track the stages of intellectual progress, the acculturation of the self, and the learning and transmission of knowledge; mediations, heuristic processes, research routines, methods of archiving and exploitation of knowledge, ideas, information […].[151]

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[150] Kenneth Goldsmith, email to the author of August 12, 2013, but also affirmed during most of his talks.

[151] Christian Jacob, "La carte des mondes lettrées," in *Des Alexandries 1, Du livre au texte*, ed. Luce Giard and Christian Jacob (Paris: BNF, 2001).
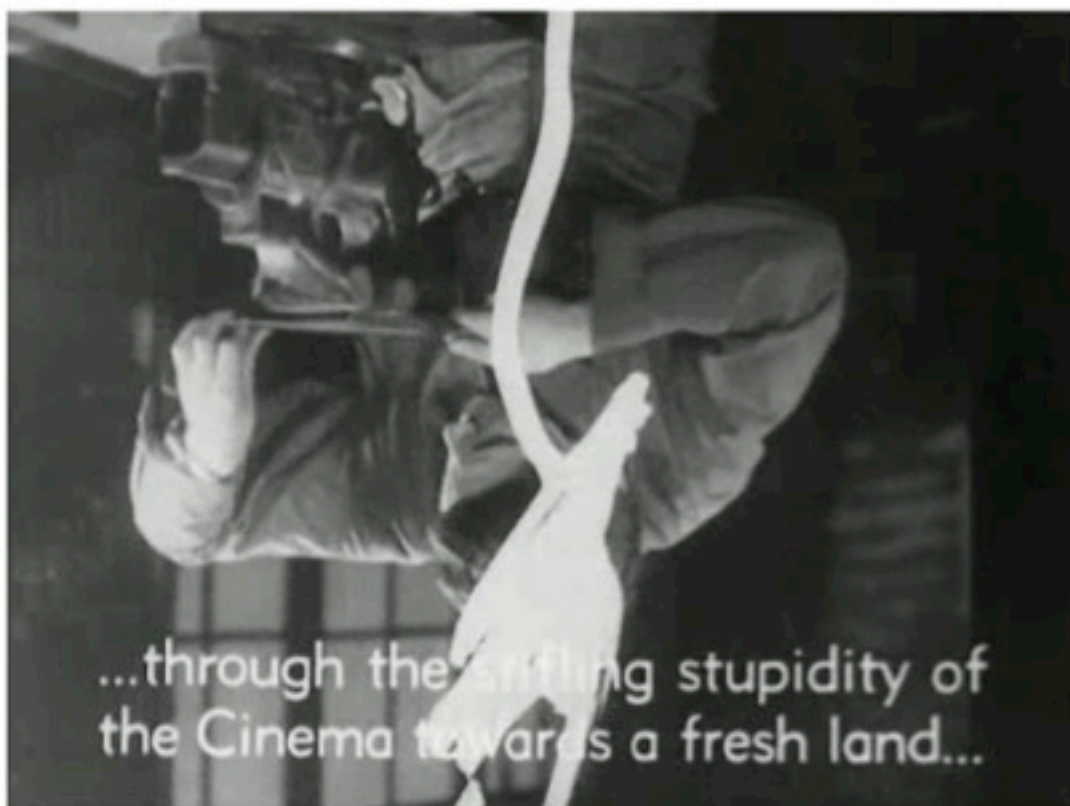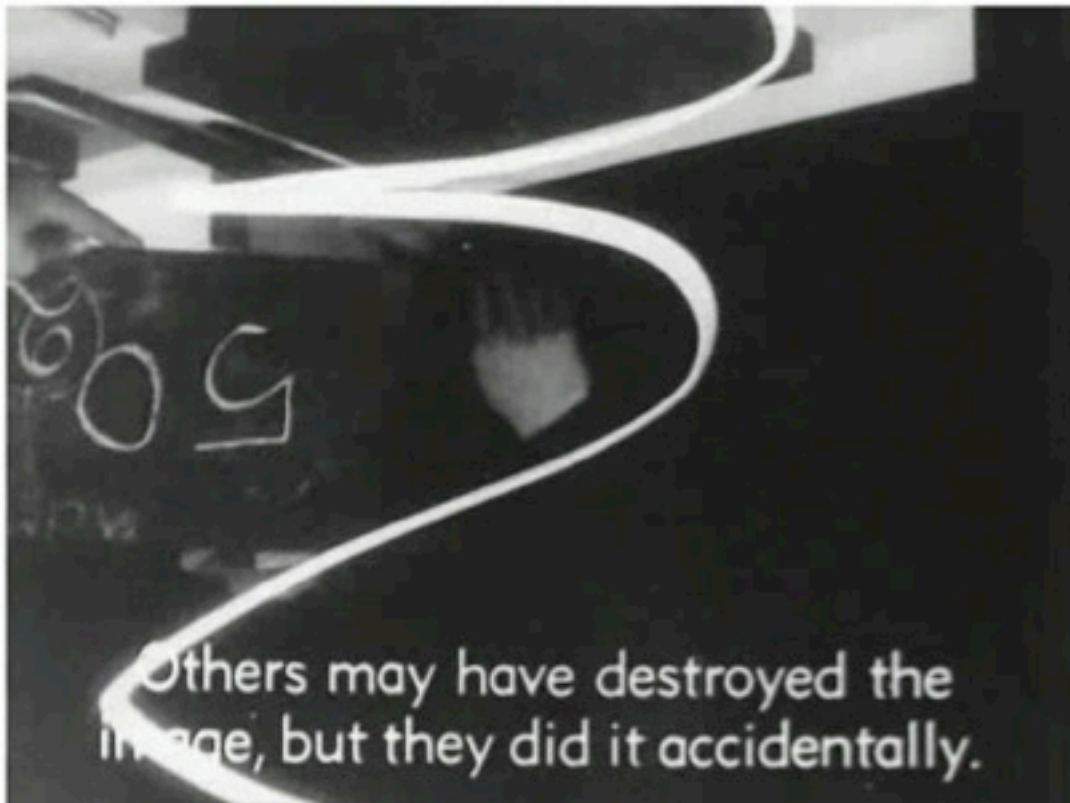
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I look to theory only when I realize that somebody has dedicated their entire life to a question I have only fleetingly considered / Je ne me tourne vers la théorie qu'après avoir réalisé que quelqu'un a consacré toute sa vie à une question qui m'avait à peine traversé l'esprit jusqu'alors, 2012, ed. Mathieu Copeland, trans. Nicolas Garait, Paris: Jeu de Paume, 2013.

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